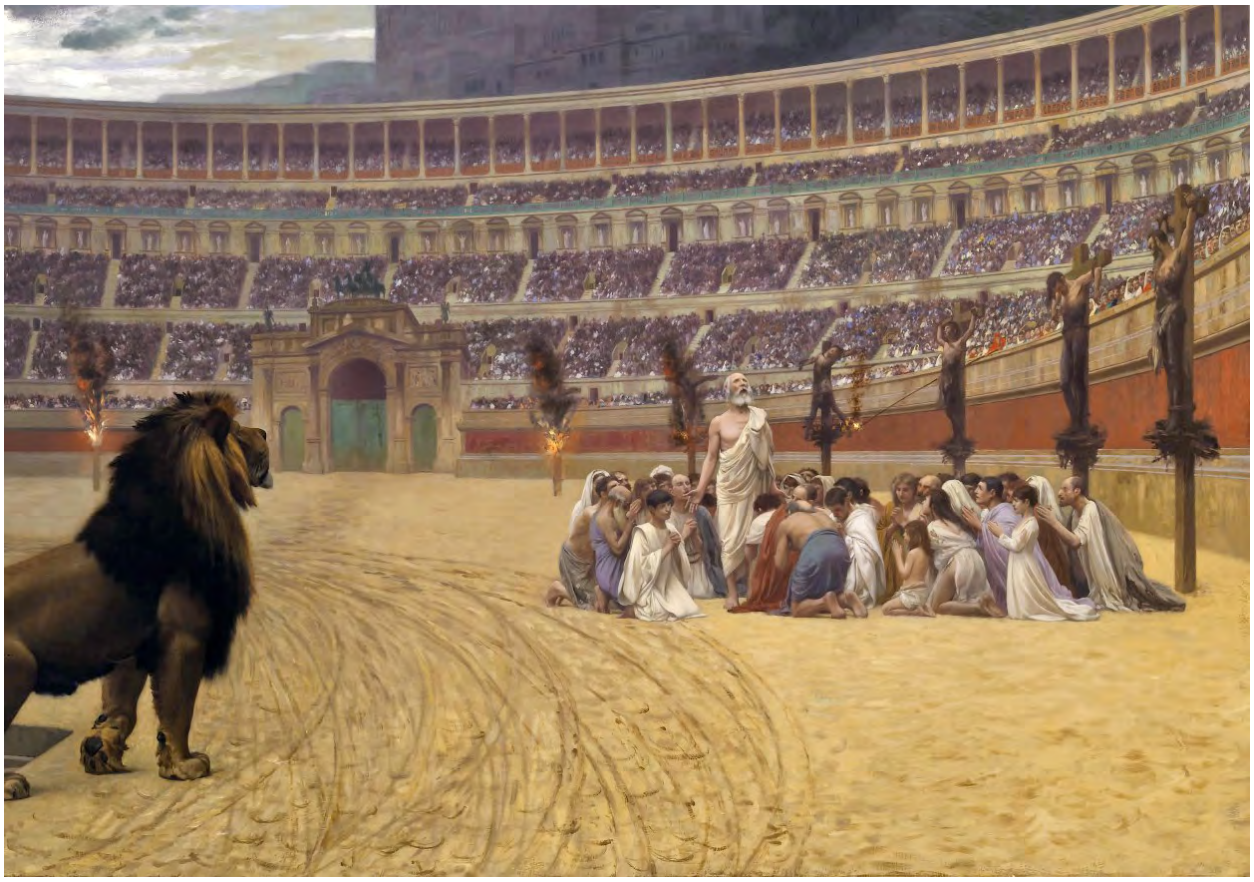
Final Decade Before the End

Jewish and Christian History Just Before the Jewish Revolt

Edward E. Stevens



Foreword by *Michael Alan Nichols*

Final Decade Before the End

Jewish and Christian History
Just Before the Jewish Revolt

Edward E. Stevens

International Preterist Association, Inc.
Bradford, Pennsylvania USA

Final Decade Before the End
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Cover Art: "The Christian Martyrs' Last Prayer" 1883 Painting by Jean-Leon Gerome (1824-1904). Currently housed in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland USA. See the Dedication page for our tribute to those dear martyred saints.

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Dedicated

...to those dear first century *apostles, prophets, and saints* who "suffered the loss of all things" and "even their own life" in order to fully and faithfully "proclaim the excellencies" of the Cross (Php. 3:8; Lk 14:26; 1 Pet 2:9). They suffered inhumane "torture, mockings, scourgings, chains, imprisonment, being destitute, afflicted, and ill-treated" in every conceivable way, because they believed that "the sufferings of that present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that was about to be revealed to them" (Heb 11:35-39; Rom 8:18). Their blood finished filling the cup of wrath that was poured out by Christ upon their persecutors shortly afterwards in the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 24:29-31; Col 1:24; Rev 16:19; 18:6).

"Men and women of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb 11:38).

They were relentlessly pursued "to the death" by their persecutors, but they "obtained a better resurrection and were made perfect" (Acts 22:4; Heb 11:35, 39). Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of *His godly ones* (Psa. 116:15). They now "rejoice with exultation" in His glorious heavenly presence, and wear the victor's "crown of life" (1 Pet 4:13; Rev 2:10). Every tear has been wiped from their eyes (Rev 7:9-17). May we also "lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us" in order to join them there in His indescribable Presence forever (Heb 12:1).

Acknowledgments

The Bibliography lists the major works that I consulted in the process of researching and composing this chronology. However, I know there are dozens, if not hundreds, of other sources that were used, which are not listed there. However, many of them are referenced inside the text without a corresponding bibliographic entry.

There are several sources which have been so extremely helpful that I must mention them. All of us are greatly indebted to *Flavius Josephus b. Mattathias* for producing so much useful information. How little we would know about first century events without his incredible *Antiquities* and *Wars*! Tacitus, Eusebius, Hegesippus, plus the Whiston, Thackeray, and Cornfeld editions of Josephus were likewise indispensible. The *Josephus.org* website, built and maintained by Gary Goldberg, is a goldmine of information, which I constantly accessed while working on the war chronology.

I also wish to thank Dr. Steven Bowman for allowing me to read and quote from his prepub English translation of Dr. David Flusser's critical Hebrew text of *Sepher Yosippon*. Arthur Ogden's *The Development of the New Testament* was constantly consulted as I reconstructed the chronology of Apostle Paul. James C. VanderKam's book on the High Priests, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*, is full of hard to find details about the priesthood and leadership of the Jews during the first century. B. H. Warmington's documentary, *Nero Reality and Legend*, provided a wealth of info about the actions and character of Nero, as well as Roman-Jewish history during the very period under consideration here. The new edition of Bishop James Ussher's, *The Annals of the World*, revised and updated by Larry and Marion Pierce, was another incredibly useful source. And last but not least, I have constantly benefited from the charts and lists and chronological insights in F. F. Bruce's *Israel and the Nations*.

So many dear brothers and sisters in Christ have encouraged me over the years to produce this chronology. I cannot remember them all. My amazing wife Beth patiently listened to me explain every one of my supposed historical "insights". Without her devoted partnership and encouragement, this work would never have happened. Arthur Melanson, Garrett Brown, Ron Wilson, Walt Hibbard, Jessie Mills, Wilson Phillips, Parker Voll, Ron Fabretti, Paul Anderson, Edmund Lee, Michael Alan Nichols, Alan Allison, Chuck Coty, Don West, Albert Pigeon, Steve Rauen, Glenn Edmiston, Carl Shields, Kerry Tyler, Tim Robinson, Rod Stokes, Brad Burt, Rex Geissler, Dave and Barb Johnston, Jan Logsdon, Patti Fuchs, and Martha McElwain deserve special mention for their prayers, input, suggestions, encouragements, and financial support. Marlene Costa, who is a professional editor and worked for IBM before she retired, graciously volunteered to read and edit the entire manuscript. She made many excellent improvements to the book, for which I am extremely grateful. There are countless others, impossible to remember, who provided input, insights and critical interaction with many of the events and reconstructions here. This is a much more useful and helpful resource as a result of their involvement with it. Many thanks to every one of you.

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Foreword

After many years of research and study of biblical history, Edward E. Stevens offers this book to help explain and document the first century historical events that took place before the Jewish revolt against Rome. As we "Preterists" discover and share our understanding of fulfilled prophecy, we are constantly asked to produce some proof to support our views. I am persuaded that this book is a God-given tool to help provide that evidence.

In this book we now have a well-researched and thoroughly-documented resource for the historical legitimacy of the eschatological view known as "Preterism". The body of believers can now more confidently grasp the truth of what occurred during the final decade leading up to the Second Coming (Parousia) of Christ. We now have scholarly evidence to know when the canonical books of the New Testament were written. We can ascertain the historical events that took place during that last decade before the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish age.

Stevens is passionate about historical accuracy. He is extremely judicious and precise about the facts that are presented here. This material includes much of what Stevens has taught in his podcasts, his writings, and his seminar lectures. It has personally helped me to see more clearly, and better explain in my books, the truth of fulfilled prophecy in the first century generation of the Apostles. This book is one that belongs in the library of every bible student, every seminary professor, and every Christian.

Michael Alan Nichols
December 2014

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the booklet, *What Happened In AD 70?* was published in 1980, there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/Christian writings, trying to determine exactly **what** happened, **when** it happened, and **the effect** it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell's view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, *First Century Events in Chronological Order*. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

In 2010, I began expanding that 73-page manuscript and presenting it on my weekly podcasts. Four years later, it had become almost 500 manuscript pages, including the intertestamental history and all the events from the birth of Christ up to the end of the first century. That was way too much material for a single volume, so we chopped it up into smaller sections. However, the amount of material covering the last dozen years before the Jewish war was still 250 manuscript pages, about half of the total! That was a large amount of material to include, but it is necessary in order to form a comprehensive understanding of what was really happening to Christianity during that final decade just before the End.

One of the major purposes I had when I began this historical study was to discover when each of the New Testament books was written, along with a good understanding of the historical circumstances which prompted and facilitated their production and distribution. Even though that was a worthy goal, I never imagined what else I would discover on the journey. While interacting with all the internal and external evidence for the date and authorship of these writings, a plethora of other insights about the history of the apostles and the saints was uncovered. Soteriological, eschatological, and ecclesiastical issues popped up everywhere, begging for examination. One historical fact led to another, brick upon brick, until a coherent history of the first century church began to emerge. The project quickly mushroomed into a full-blown historical reconstruction of first century Christianity, with its development of the New Testament Scriptures, and its experience of all the endtime fulfillments that Jesus and the Apostles had promised them.

In order to gain a deep understanding of the first century, we need to *experience* it like an eyewitness. We need to know not only **what** happened and **when**, but **where** it happened and **why,** and **how** it is related to the overall plan of redemption. That requires us to go far beyond the mere recital of dates and events that are contained in this book, to look at *maps, atlases, archaeological artifacts, timelines, and photos*. After doing that kind of intense study, I now almost feel like I was there and experienced those things firsthand. I have also heard so many dear brothers say that a *visit to the biblical lands* is tremendously helpful. The more we *immerse* ourselves in the first century historical context, the better we will understand eschatology and our Christian faith. We need to know how all these events interrelate with each other and connect to the biblical plan of redemption.

There is a lot more to discover here than just the documentation of the fulfillment of all the eschatological events. There is a profound providential plan running through all these events that will bless your socks off when you catch sight of it and follow it through to its consummation.

My goal was not to produce a mere catalog of all the unsupported speculations about what might have happened (such as Eusebius appears to have done in some cases), but rather to ascertain "at the mouth of two or more credible eyewitnesses" exactly what DID occur, in what sequence it occurred, and how it interrelated with other Jewish, Roman, and Christian events.

My method was to use the very best sources as close to the first century as possible (e.g., the New Testament and Josephus), and to use their internal evidence as the main basis for this chronology. Wherever there are known dates that have been confirmed by multiple witnesses, these are used as foundations to build other dates upon. But this is not just an annotated list of events pulled from Josephus' jumbled accounts and arranged in chronological order. We do engage in a significant amount of historical

reconstruction (educated guesses), but hopefully no historical *revisionism*. The reader will have to be the judge of that.

In my research of other historical documentaries, I noticed that many of them separate the Jewish, Roman, and Christian events into three separate lists. That approach simply does not work for me, since it does not reveal very many of the interrelationships between the events. To see those relationships, I needed to have all the Jewish, Roman, and Christian events put together into one continuous chronological list.

I did not realize at first how helpful that would be. By putting all three of those lists together into one continuous stream with seemingly unrelated events right next to each other, patterns and interrelationships began to appear. Little nuances and details, that never had any obvious significance before, now revealed connections between events that I had not noticed previously. One detail led to another, and then another, and then another – connecting the dots. Those relationships between events were an additional dynamic that I had not anticipated. They provided far more insight than a mere chronological list of events could ever do. It is like the old saying: “The whole is more than the sum of its parts.”

As I began to perceive some of those relationships between events, my interest was riveted. I was now finally able to put together not just a list of independent events, but a coherent interpretation of those events and their impact upon each other. This is what historical reconstruction is all about.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events, and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literally fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to "teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul's other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38-44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of the Jewish War in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the endtime prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those last five years just before the Neronic persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the endtime events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of "tribulation" upon the church and the "days of vengeance" upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

This has been a challenging journey, but often very exciting and inspiring. And yet there is so much more buried beneath the surface that needs the attention of future preterist students and scholars. I hope they will use this as a launching pad to take it much further. We have, no doubt, missed the mark in some of our explanations here, but it still provides something with which to start, and with which to compare and contrast future studies. That alone provides justification for this work.

Admittedly, some of these events and dates are based on very slim evidence, and are nothing more than deduction based on the best internal evidence that I could ferret out from the primary sources. But hopefully there are no suggestions here that are pure speculation with no basis in any kind of fact.

We may never know for sure exactly when, where, and how Apostle Paul was martyred, but using the facts that he mentions (people, places, sequences, future intentions, etc.) we can reconstruct what could have happened, and maybe even what probably happened. And that is just one example of the benefits of this kind of historical study. There will be many such insights that will materialize in your mind as you read through this chronology.

We are devoted to chasing after the Biblical and Historical Truth, *wherever it leads,* and *whatever it takes*. This book was written for truth-chasers like you. There are so many confusing voices out there in the religious world, who compromise the truth, and lead people astray. We need certainty and absolutes to anchor our faith, so that we are not cast about by every wind of speculation and false doctrine that blows through. We need to go back to the Bible to see what it really says, not what others think it says. We need to be Bereans who search the Scriptures daily to see whether the things we have been taught are really true. After studying all this history, I no longer read the New Testament in the same way I did before. May your understanding of First Century Jewish, Roman, and Christian history be stimulated and stretched and richly blessed as much or more than mine has.

You will probably perceive a lot of additional insights into First Century history that we did not notice here. When you do, please email me and let me know about it. And if you notice any parts of this which are clearly defective and incorrect, please do me the favor of letting me know about it so that I can correct it before the next edition.

Abbreviations, Citations, and Bibliographic references

Antiq = The *Antiquities* of the Jews by Josephus
War = The *Wars* of the Jews by Josephus
Euseb HE = The *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius
Yos. = *Sefer Yosippon* (English translation) by Dr. Steven Bowman
Heg. = *Pseudo-Hegesippus*
Tacitus = *The Histories* by Tacitus
Pap. = Papias (late first and early second century Christian writer)

How to use the citations and references to Josephus' works: In the following example [*War* 6.300 (6.5.3)], the first set of numbers (6.300) is what you will need to find it in the Loeb Classical Library edition by Thackeray. The second set of numbers in parentheses (6.5.3) refers to the Whiston edition.

When the NT Books Were Written

Below is a list of the dates for each New Testament book. Trying to establish the sequence and dates for these books with any significant degree of probability, forces us to dig deeply into the first century historical landscape. But that effort is richly rewarded by a much better understanding of how the NT books were written, and how all the endtime events were fulfilled. It puts the pieces of the historical puzzle into place, allowing us to see a clearer picture of the first century church and its system of faith.

AD 31-38 ---------- Matthew
AD 38-44 ---------- Mark
AD 51-52 ---------- Galatians
AD 51-52 ---------- 1 Thessalonians
AD 51-52 ---------- 2 Thessalonians
AD 57---------- 1 Corinthians
AD 57---------- 2 Corinthians
AD 58---------- Romans
AD 61---------- Luke
AD 61-62 ---------- Acts
AD 60-62 ---------- John
AD 61-62 ---------- James
AD 61-62 ---------- 1, 2, 3 John

AD 62-63---------- Revelation
AD 62-63---------- Ephesians
AD 62-63---------- Colossians
AD 62-63---------- Philemon
AD 62-63---------- Philippians
AD 62-63---------- Hebrews
Mid-63 ---------- Titus
Mid-63 ---------- 1 Timothy
Mid-63 ---------- 1 Peter
Late 63 ---------- 2 Timothy
Late 64 ---------- Jude
Late 64 ---------- 2 Peter

Dating the Gospel of Matthew (AD 31-38)

As Frank Luke notes, "Matthew seems to view the city [of Jerusalem] as still intact when he writes that: *For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood* ***to this day*** (Matt 27:8)." Thus, a pre-70 date for Matthew seems easily vindicated. And there is more evidence, both inside and outside Matthew which easily pushes the date two or three decades earlier.

For example, we could ask: *Is there any evidence in Paul's six earliest epistles (i.e., the ones written before AD 58) that he had read any of the four gospels? What about in his later epistles (after AD 58)?* It would help us assign dates to the four gospels, especially in relation to Paul's earlier writings, if we can find any definite quotes or allusions to the gospels in them. Here are some guidelines for our consideration:

1. There are no long quotes from any of the four gospels in Paul's epistles. However there are some short phrases, several allusions, and one big parallel section, that appear to be pulled from some of the gospels.
2. The parallels between Matthew 24 and Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians is a good place to start. When we have something as significant as this, we really do not need much else to prove that Paul was familiar with, and had access to the Gospel of Matthew before he wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonians. Even though that is not the only evidence, it is compelling enough to push way beyond probability to almost certainty.
3. One thing we need to establish right up front, is that Matthew appears to be the first gospel to be produced, followed by Mark, Luke, and John. We believe this because Luke quotes and alludes to both Matthew and Mark, showing that Matthew and Mark were already available; and Mark quotes from Matthew (and not from Luke), showing that Matthew was probably written before both Mark and Luke. Furthermore, John alludes to some unique material in Luke, implying that John was written after Luke, making it the last of the four gospels. So, that appears to be the sequence in which they were written (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), based on a comparison and analysis of their similarities and differences.
4. Now let's look at some of the more significant connections between Paul's epistles and the gospel of Matthew specifically.

Dating Matthew with Paul's Use of it in his epistles to the Thessalonians:

A. The Major Evidence First: 1 Thess. 4-5; 2 Thess. 2; and 1 Cor. 15:52 – many parallels with Matthew 24, and possibly with Mark 13 also (which would mean that both gospels were written before Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians). It is utterly astounding to see how few futurist commentaries are willing to explore the significance of this amazing connection. Don Preston and Mike Sullivan have both documented the linkage between Matthew 24 and 1 Thess. 4-5 (Preston: *We Shall Meet Him in the Air*, pp. 72-80, 171; Sullivan: *House Divided*, pp. 107-110). The similarities are so clear and strong, that it cannot be ignored or explained away. It certainly allows for the possibility that Paul had access to a copy of Matthew's gospel while writing his two epistles to the Thessalonians and First Corinthians. Paul was obviously aware of everything Jesus had taught in the Olivet Discourse. The only question is whether he had a photographic memory from the oral teaching of the other apostles, or had direct revelation from Christ on this subject, or had access to a copy of Matthew's gospel. And these three options are not mutually exclusive. It could be all of the above. We have noted in the past that as soon as the Gentiles came into the Church (e.g., Cornelius in AD 38), and churches began to be established outside Palestine (e.g. Antioch in AD 41), there was an immediate need for written material to use in teaching the new Christians (esp. the Gentiles). We saw how that need was mentioned in Acts 11-13 at Antioch.

In view of the rumors of war generated by Caesar Gaius Caligula in AD 39-41, it is certain that the church would have needed clear teaching on the endtimes at that time. The Olivet Discourse would have been extremely important for them to know at that critical time when it looked like the abomination was about to be set up in the temple and the Jews were ready to break out in open revolt. Certainly the apostles would have been orally teaching them about it. The question is when that oral teaching about the Olivet Discourse would have been committed to writing. Certainly that scare with Caligula would have created a lot of concern and confusion, which the apostles would have needed to deal with quickly and thoroughly. It seems likely that Matthew, who had been a tax collector, and who therefore obviously had scribal abilities, would have been urged to write down all of Jesus' teaching for the church, to clear the confusion and quiet their concerns. That is exactly how Paul uses this similar material in 1 Thess. 4-5. It was to help the Thessalonians see that the End had not yet arrived (as they had been told by some false teachers). There were still some big events yet to happen before the end arrived.

It seems to me that Paul is drawing his information about this from Matthew's gospel. Paul wrote this first letter to the Thessalonians while he was at Corinth on his second missionary journey (AD 51-52). This means that Matthew was most likely written before Paul left on his second journey, and that Paul probably saw a copy of it in Jerusalem when he went there for the Jerusalem Council (AD 49), and made a copy for himself to take with him on his journeys (a part of his collection of "books and parchments" that he carried with him). The church in Antioch most likely had a copy of Matthew at this time also. This very effectively fixes the date of **Matthew** no later than the Jerusalem council (AD 49), and **probably before the Caligula crisis as well (AD 39-41).** This allows an earlier date for the gospels of Mark and Luke, and maybe for the gospel of John also.

B. Another significant connection with Matthew: 1 Thess 1:10; 3:3; 5:9; (destined for *tribulation*, not wrath, and for obtaining *salvation*) – Matt. 24:9, 21-22, 29 (they will deliver you to *tribulation*... those days will be cut short, so that the elect will be *saved* from the *wrath* to come); cf. Acts 14:22 (through much *tribulation* we must enter the Kingdom); Mt. 13:21 (when tribulation arises...). All of these passages have significant similarity with each other, again suggesting that Paul was framing his remarks to the Thessalonians about the coming tribulation in conformity with how Matthew 24 teaches it.

C. Other less significant allusions to the gospels in Paul's epistles:

1. Allusions in Earlier Epistles (AD 51-58)

- Acts 13:51 (they shook off the dust of their feet) – Mt. 10:14 (shake the dust off your feet); cf. Mark 6:11 and Luke 9:5 and 10:11. This was on the first missionary journey (AD 45-48) before the Judaizer controversy and the Jerusalem council (AD 49). Barnabas had probably heard this teaching from the apostles in Jerusalem, and shared it with Paul. It does not demand that Paul

had seen the gospel statements about it, but it certainly would allow for that possibility, especially if Barnabas already had his own personal copy of Matthew's gospel in his possession (as tradition suggests). This brings up the further question about what else Paul might have learned from the apostles in Jerusalem through Barnabas and Silas, without having read the gospel accounts. Plus we need to remember that Paul claimed that he had direct revelation from Christ Himself on a number of these things.

- Rom. 3:31 (Do we then nullify the Law through faith) – Matt. 5:17 (Do not think that I came to abolish the Law) – The words "nullify" and "abolish" are two different Greek words, even though the thought and intent are very similar. The Judaizers probably accused Paul of abolishing the Law, which they knew Jesus had not told them to do. The Judaizers had either heard Christ say those things, or else had heard the apostles teaching it. There is no demand here that Paul was referencing the written statements in Matthew 5. However, when we remember that Paul is writing to Roman Christians who had not been taught by Jesus or the apostles, the possibility surfaces that they may have been troubled by Judaizers there in Rome who were making reference to the written words of Jesus in Matthew's gospel, of which the Roman church by this time (AD 58) could easily have had a copy.
- Rom. 2:27 (the uncircumcised ... will he not judge you who though having ... circumcision are a transgressor of the Law) – Mt. 12:41 (The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah)
- 1 Cor. 10:27 ("eat anything that is set before you") – Lk. 10:7-8 ("eating and drinking what they give you" and "eat what is set before you") - As we said before, this does not demand that Paul had read Luke's gospel, but it does suggest that Paul was aware of what Jesus had taught on this, either through Barnabas, Silas, or the teaching of other apostles, or even by direct revelation from Christ Himself.
- 1 Cor. 9:9; 9:14; and 1 Tim. 5:18 ("you shall not muzzle the ox" and "the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel" and "the laborer is worthy of his wages") – Lk. 10:7 ("the laborer is worthy of his wages"); Mt. 10:10 ("for the worker is worthy of his support"); cf. Lk. 9:1-5; 10:1-12
- 1 Cor. 11:24-26 ("do this in remembrance of Me" and "you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes") – Lk. 22:16-19 ("I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" and "do this in remembrance of Me"); Matt. 26:29 ("I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"); Mk. 14:25 ("I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God")
- 1 Cor. 15 - Paul alludes to things mentioned in the gospels (witnesses of the risen Christ)
- 1 Cor. 7:10-15 (to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband ... and that the husband should not divorce his wife") – Matt. 5:32, 19:6-9; Mark 10:7-9, 11-12; Luke 16:18
- 2 Cor. 10:1 ("I urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ) - Mt. 11:29 ("I am gentle and humble in heart")

2. Allusions in Later Epistles (AD 60-64):

- 1 Tim. 5:17-18 – (Deut. 25:4 and Lk. 10:7)
- 1 Tim. 1:15 (Christ Jesus <u>came</u> into the world <u>to save sinners</u>) - Lk. 19:10 ("For the Son of Man <u>has come</u> to seek and <u>to save that which was lost</u>" - this was added into Mt. 18:11 later, not original to Matthew, original to Luke only); Mt. 9:13 (I did not come <u>to call the righteous, but sinners</u>);
- 1 Tim. 4:8 (godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and for the one about to be - this is a trustworthy statement); Mk. 10:29-30 (he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age... and in the coming age, eternal life); Lk. 18:30 (receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life); cf. Matt. 5-7 (Sermon on Mount); 1 Cor. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:19;
- Heb. 13:20 (the great shepherd of the sheep) – cp. Jn. 10:11,17 (the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep)
- Acts 21:13 (What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?) – Mk. 5:39 (Why make a commotion and weep?)
- Acts 10:21 – Mt. 26:50 and Jn. 18:4-6

D. Even though all this does not give us a precise date for Matthew and Mark, it does push the date of Matthew back before the Jerusalem council in AD 49, which is extremely helpful. This opens up a longer period of development for the other three gospels of Mark, Luke and John, so that they do not have to be compressed into a very short period of time between 58 and 64 AD. Luke and Acts were probably not written until after Paul and Luke reached Rome (AD 61-62). This would harmonize well with the supposition that Matthew was written before the Jerusalem Council, at which time Barnabas and Paul may have received copies of it to take with them on their missionary journeys.

E. The gospel of Matthew was evidently written before the Jerusalem Council. There is evidence (both internal and external) that Luke and Paul had access to the gospel of Matthew at the same time Barnabas and Mark did, since Paul's two epistles to the Thessalonians (AD 51-52) show amazing familiarity with and similarity to the Olivet discourse in Matthew 23-25.

Several conservative evangelical writers have noticed this connection, and have used it to date Matthew's gospel before Paul's second missionary journey when he wrote the Thessalonian correspondence (e.g., see the "Thessalonians and Matthew" paper by Michael M. Canham at the 2012 ETS in Milwaukee, as well as the articles by Don Preston, and Mike Sullivan). See the similar suggestions of Greg Beale in his various works. These commentators have noted the dozens of allusions to and similarities between Paul's Thessalonian epistles and the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 23-25, implying that Paul had a copy of Matthew available to him before he wrote to the Thessalonians in AD 51-52. If not a decade earlier, Paul would at least have had access to a copy of Matthew in Jerusalem on the council trip (AD 49), at the same time Barnabas did, and could easily have made a copy of Barnabas's personal copy of it after returning to Antioch just before he left on his second journey. This easily pushes the date of Matthew back before the Jerusalem council in AD 49.

This early date for Matthew explains how Paul was so familiar with "the word of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15) regarding the Parousia. Matthew uses the word "parousia" four times in chapter 24. Both futurist and preterist expositors have noted the numerous parallels between Matthew 23-25 and 1 Thess. 4-5 (and 2 Thess. 2), again implying that Paul had seen Matthew's gospel before he wrote First and Second Thessalonians in AD 51-52. Either Paul had a direct revelation from God that was exactly parallel with the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 23-25), or he had heard the apostles in Jerusalem explain all these things to him while he was there at the festivals, or he had access to the gospel of Matthew at the time he wrote First Thessalonians (AD 51-52). Any one or all three of these scenarios is possible, therefore we have to consider the probability that *Matthew* was already written before Paul went on his second missionary journey in AD 50.

There is a tradition which says that Barnabas had a copy of the gospel of Matthew with him when he took Mark with him to Cyprus in AD 50, after they had returned from the Jerusalem council. This would push the date of Matthew back to at least the first missionary journey of Paul (AD 45-48), before Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem for the council in AD 49. If the trip to Jerusalem for the council in AD 49 was the occasion when Barnabas received his copy of Matthew's gospel, then the gospel had to have been written before the council (i.e., before AD 49). This would mean that Barnabas had a copy with him when he went back to Antioch, as well as later when he took Mark to Cyprus (AD 50). This explains how Mark had access to Matthew on Cyprus, and how he could have used Matthew's gospel to compose his own gospel account (AD 55).

The inspired gospel of Matthew may have been the catalyst for the production and circulation of other written documents, such as the *Didache* and the *Decrees* from the Jerusalem council. The literary efforts of the apostles, which ultimately produced the NT canon, appear to have been well underway by this time (AD 48). Matthew and Mark may have been two of the books (Gk. *biblia*, scrolls) and parchments (Gk. *membranas,* codices?) mentioned by Paul in 2 Tim. 4:13, which he carried with him on his missionary journeys.

F. In view of all the above considerations, it appears that the most likely date range for the composition of the gospel of Matthew can be narrowed down to:

AD 31-38 – <u>Gospel of Matthew</u> was definitely written before the Jerusalem Council (AD 49) and Paul's second missionary journey (AD 50-53), during which Paul wrote Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians. The Thessalonian letters contain numerous parallels and allusions to material in Matthew 24, implying that he had seen the gospel of Matthew before he wrote to the Thessalonians in AD 51-53. We have

looked at those parallels above. Note what Eusebius says regarding the gospel of Matthew:

> **3Euseb. 24:6** For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to **other peoples**, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence. [*Ecclesiastical History* Book 3 Ch. 24 Sect. 6]

This suggests that the gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew for the benefit of his fellow Jewish believers there in Judea, and then later translated into Greek for the benefit of the Gentile believers. The Jewish believers in Judea tended to be Judaizers (Ebionites and Nazarenes), who would have taken that Hebrew version of the gospel with them to Pella when they fled there later). However, such a Hebrew version of Matthew's gospel has never been found, even though there are references to its existence in the first two centuries.

Matthew's gospel was clearly **written with a Hebrew Jewish audience in mind**, while Mark's gospel was written from more of a Hellenistic perspective. Matthew writes as if he is **not aware of any uncircumcised Gentile believers, nor writing with their perspective in mind**. He does not explain things for the Gentiles, like Mark and Luke did. Everything he says is coming from a Jewish perspective, and written to Jewish people who did not need an explanation for all those things. **This implies that Matthew wrote at a time before the uncircumcised Gentiles (e.g., Cornelius) had been brought into the Church, when the Church was still totally Jewish (i.e., before AD 38).**

This also implies that Mark and Luke were written after the Gentiles had become a part of the church (i.e., after Cornelius in AD 38), and probably after the crisis with Caligula subsided and evangelism among the Gentiles was less dangerous and more acceptable (after 41).

Notice that Eusebius says Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew for the Judean Christians before he left to go on his missionary journeys outside Palestine. We do not see him mentioned by name as being present in Jerusalem in the book of Acts after the arrest of all the apostles in Acts 5. He did not appear at the Jerusalem Council in AD 49. **So it is quite likely that he left on his missionary journey before the council, and maybe even before Cornelius was converted (AD 38).**

Notice that it says he went to "**other peoples**". This could mean that he went to the Diaspora Jews or to Gentiles outside Palestine. Such an enterprise could have occurred as early as right after the stoning of Stephen (AD 31), or as late as the conversion of Cornelius and the first Gentiles (AD 38), just before Caligula threatened to put his statue in the Temple in AD 39. Anywhere in that range (AD 31-39) would have been a great time for Matthew to leave Jerusalem and go do mission work in the Diaspora.

There are two early and strong traditions (besides Eusebius) stating that Matthew made a personal copy of his gospel and gave it to Barnabas before Matthew left to go on his missionary venture. Since Matthew does not show up in the Acts record after chapter 5, it implies that he left Jerusalem before the Acts 15 council at a time while Barnabas was still there and had not yet been "sent off to Antioch" (Acts 11:22) in about AD 41. It is certainly possible that Barnabas took his personal copy of Matthew's gospel with him when he went to Antioch in AD 41. This would date Matthew's gospel before AD 41. Some think Matthew probably left Jerusalem after the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1), in connection with the persecution that was stirred up at that time (AD 31-33). However, Acts 11:1 refers to "the apostles ... who were throughout Judea" which could have included Matthew (AD 40). Barnabas was certainly still in Jerusalem at that time, so that would give us a range of dates for Matthew from AD 31-41.

Those two traditions imply that Barnabas already had a copy of the gospel of Matthew with him when he took Mark to Cyprus in AD 50, and that Barnabas had received his copy of Matthew's gospel directly from Matthew himself, evidently while both Matthew and Barnabas were still living in Jerusalem (i.e., before AD 41 when Barnabas left for Antioch).

Barnabas was sent to help in the teaching and edification of the saints in Antioch (Acts 11:22). Barnabas needed help in the teaching work, so he went to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him back to Antioch (Acts 11:25). Barnabas and Saul taught the Antioch church for a whole year before they took a Gentile contribution back to Jerusalem. Here we actually see the Jerusalem Church sending teachers and prophets (Acts 11:27) to churches outside Palestine. So the teaching and missionary trips were already underway by this time (AD 41). It seems probable that Matthew had already left Jerusalem by that time, thus implying that his gospel was already written before he left.

Dating the Gospel of Mark (AD 38-44)

AD 38-44 – <u>The Gospel of Mark</u> is so similar to Matthew that many believe it was written after Matthew. In fact, most (if not all) of the earliest traditions about the sequence of writing for the three synoptic gospels, say that Matthew was first, Mark second, and Luke last (e.g., Eusebius). Tradition posits a very close relationship between Mark and Peter, which would explain some details found in Mark's gospel that are not mentioned in Matthew, which only one of the twelve apostles could have related to Mark from their eyewitness perspective. Peter is the most likely one of the apostles from whom Mark could have obtained those details. This implies that Mark wrote it at a time when he was in Jerusalem and had easy access to Apostle Peter.

According to Eusebius and others, when Peter read Matthew's account of the gospel, he used Mark to write an account which better reflected his own perspective, and to add details that Matthew did not include. **That means that Mark could have written his gospel before he went to Antioch the first time in AD 44 (cf. Acts 13:5).** Some have objected that this was when Mark was still young and immature, as evidenced by his quitting the journey and returning to Jerusalem in AD 46 (Acts 13:13). That objection certainly deserves serious consideration, even though it is not enough in itself to negate the possibility of Mark writing his gospel before he went to Antioch in AD 44. **But it is also quite possible that his return to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13), and his three-year residence there (AD 46-49), could have been the time when Peter commissioned him to write his version of the gospel. However, I prefer a date before he left Jerusalem the first time (i.e., before AD 44).**

The high volume of similarities with Matthew implies that it was written not long after the Gospel of Matthew, at a time when **Mark was still in Jerusalem with access to Apostle Peter**, from whose perspective Mark seems to be writing. We know that Mark left Jerusalem in AD 44 to go to Antioch with Barnabas and Paul, and a short time later went with them on Paul's first missionary journey to Cyprus. But he turned back from Paul and Barnabas after they left Cyprus (AD 46), and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Then after the council in Jerusalem (AD 49), Mark went back to Antioch with Barnabas and Paul. When Paul left on his second missionary journey, Mark went to Cyprus with Barnabas (AD 50). There are two separate traditions which say that Barnabas already had a copy of the gospel of Matthew with him when he took Mark to Cyprus in AD 50, and that Barnabas had received his copy of Matthew directly from Matthew himself, evidently **while both Matthew and Barnabas were still living in Jerusalem (i.e., before AD 41 when Barnabas left for Antioch).**

In contrast to Matthew's gospel, which was clearly written with a Hebrew Jewish audience in mind, Mark's gospel was written from more of a **Hellenistic perspective**, evidently at a time after the uncircumcised Gentiles (e.g., Cornelius) had been brought into the Church (i.e., after AD 38), and probably after the Caligula crisis was over (AD 41). The Gentile Christians might have had difficulties with the strong Jewish orientation of Matthew's gospel, and so Mark wrote a Hellenistic version of the gospel to help those new Hellenistic-oriented Jews and Gentiles. This adaptation of Matthew's Jewish-oriented gospel to a Hellenistic audience may explain why Mark was so interested in going to Antioch with Barnabas to help teach the Hellenistic and Gentile Christians there in Antioch and nearby Cyprus. Since Mark was related to Barnabas, and since Barnabas was a native of Cyprus, the possibility exists that Mark shared a similar Diaspora Jewish or Hellenistic cultural and linguistic background. That would explain the Hellenistic orientation of his gospel, as well as why he wanted to go to Antioch and Cyprus where that orientation was dominant.

The Gospel of Mark was evidently finished and in circulation before Luke wrote his gospel in about AD 61, since Luke says he used at least two other accounts in his preparation for writing, and his account draws from some of the unique material in Mark's account.

It is possible that Paul and Luke had already acquired a separate copy of Matthew's gospel, so that when Mark brought his own gospel account to Rome (AD 61), Luke then had access to both Matthew and Mark. This would harmonize well with the tradition that says Barnabas's copy of Matthew was buried with Barnabas just as he had requested. This implies that Mark had already produced his own gospel using Barnabas's copy of Matthew before it was buried with Barnabas on Cyprus. Knowing that he would be without that copy of Matthew, Mark could have hurriedly made his own shortened version of the gospel using Matthew as his guide.

Tradition says that Barnabas had a copy of Matthew's gospel with him when he took Mark to Cyprus in AD 50. Mark could have used that copy of Matthew as his source to write his own account of

the gospel (circa AD 55). Barnabas and Mark probably did not stay on the island of Cyprus that whole time, since the *Epistle of Barnabas* mentions a recent trip to some churches elsewhere, and 1 Cor 9:6 implies that Barnabas had done some mission work in the area of Greece and was known to the saints in Corinth. It is also likely that Barnabas and Mark traveled back to Jerusalem for some of the annual feasts (Passover or Pentecost), where Mark could have collaborated with Peter to produce **the gospel of Mark**. Mark would have left a copy of it there with the church in Jerusalem.

It is also possible that Barnabas and Mark worked separately on some occasions (especially if Barnabas had gone to Asia or Greece or Rome as tradition suggests), and Barnabas took his copy of Matthew with him. Mark would have wanted to have a gospel account to keep with him while Barnabas was gone. This might explain why he created his own abbreviated version of Matthew's gospel to use in his own independent teaching work while Barnabas was gone with the copy of Matthew. It is also possible that Mark made a copy of Matthew's gospel before he buried the copy that Barnabas had. He then could have taken both gospel accounts with him to Paul in Rome. These considerations still allow a wide range of possible dates for Mark, from as early as AD 41 to as late as AD 60.

According to tradition, just before Barnabas was killed by the Jews on Cyprus (AD 60-61), he instructed Mark to bury him with his copy of Matthew's gospel, and then go to Paul and join him. Mark could easily have made a copy of Matthew's gospel and taken it, along with his own gospel of Mark, to Paul in Rome. Luke then would have had access to the other two gospel accounts, enabling him to more easily compose his own new account that was targeted toward a gentile audience (especially for Nero's court in Rome). This would explain why all three gospels are so similar in content and organization. Matthew was written first. Barnabas had a copy of Matthew, which Mark used to compose his own version. Luke then used both Matthew and Mark to compose his synoptic account.

However, since it seems that **Mark** was still in Jerusalem consulting with Peter at the time he wrote his gospel, and apparently had access to Matthew's gospel, I would prefer to keep the date for Mark somewhere within the range of AD 41-44. That is after the latest likely date for Matthew (AD 38), and before Mark went to Antioch with Barnabas and Paul in AD 44. It also was after the first Gentiles had come into the Church (AD 38) and after the Caligula crisis (AD 39-41). This harmonizes perfectly with Parker Voll's independent analysis in his paper presentation at the 2008 *Evangelical Theological Society* entitled, “Utilizing Acts to Help Us Through the Synoptic Maze,” where he dates Matthew “during the first decade of the church” (AD 30-40), with Mark written soon after “in the early to mid-40’s”.

Those who compare the three gospels will notice that Mark has additional material that Matthew does not have, suggesting that Mark was written later. And Luke clearly borrowed from both Matthew and Mark, plus has some unique material that was not borrowed from either of them, suggesting that Luke was written after Matthew and Mark, and based on additional research. Luke and Acts appear to have been written after Paul and Luke reached Rome in AD 61, where they had access to both Matthew and Mark. Thus the similarities and differences between Mark and both Matthew and Luke seem best explained by a Matthean original, especially in those sections where Mark appears to be reflecting Peter's perspective. That implies that Mark was still in Jerusalem at the time of writing, in order to closely consult with Peter. Peter and Mark had seen Matthew's gospel, and added some things to it from Peter's perspective, which are not found in Matthew.

After doing most of my study of the synoptic gospels and formulating my conclusions for the priority of Matthew and the early dates of Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38-44), I got a copy of John Wenham’s excellent book, *Redating Matthew, Mark, and Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem*, where he assigns very similar dates to Matthew (AD 40) and Mark (AD 45). It was gratifying to see that his conclusions were close to mine, even though his process of arriving at those dates was significantly different. Another book that was helpful in terms of presuppositions and methodology was *Restoring the Original Bible* by Ernest L. Martin. He argues for the theory of *Apostolic Canonization*, which dates almost all of the New Testament writings before AD 70, except for John’s writings.

R. Alan Cole, in the *Tyndale Commentary* on Mark, had this to say about the order in which the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) were written: "For a spirited defense of **Matthean priority**, see, among modern scholars, **Butler** [Butler, B. C., *The Originality of St. Matthew* (Cambridge: 1951).] and **Farmer** [Farmer, W. R., *The Synoptic Problem* (1964).]. Their main arguments are that Matthew’s Gospel, which is of course far longer than Mark, contains all of Mark’s material but for some forty verses, in addition to much extra material: that Matthew and Luke share numerous agreements as against Mark: that Matthew retains Palestinian touches, as against Mark’s

alleged signs of Pauline influence, and his adaptations of the tradition to Graeco-Roman readers."

The introduction to Mark in the *NIGTC* commentary commented on which gospel was first written: "C. S. Mann's *Anchor Bible* commentary of 1986 [says that he] believes in the **priority of Matthew**, and so interprets Mark as a deliberate revision of the material earlier recorded by Matthew."

For a thorough survey of the history of the study of the Synoptic Problem throughout church history, from a conservative evangelical perspective, see David Laird Dungan's book, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels*. New York: Doubleday, a division of Random House. First Edition 1999.

The Synoptic Problem

This author takes the position that Matthew was the first of the synoptic gospel accounts to be written, with Mark next, and Luke last. There are others who share the Matthean priority, but insert Luke as the second gospel instead of Mark.

Many different theories have been developed over the last five hundred years to explain the similarities and differences between the three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). All of those theories have strengths and weaknesses, with none of them resolving all the difficulties. Some theories suggest that there may have been **earlier editions of some of the gospels (e.g., a proto-Mark or proto-Luke), which were later revised, expanded, or contracted to produce a second finalized edition**. That might explain some of the anomalies in the synoptics that are otherwise inexplicable.

For instance, it might explain why there are three or more different endings to the gospel of Mark, and why various copies of the same gospel differ from one another in what they include and exclude, as well as in the amount of localization and standardization that they exhibit. It is certainly possible that the gospel writers edited their earlier versions and produced another edition several years later (after some of the other gospels had appeared in the mean time). This might explain why a later edition of Mark could include some material from Luke, even though Luke was not yet available when Mark originally wrote his first edition. This is a possibility that needs serious consideration.

While studying the Synoptic problem, much of my attention was focused on Luke-Acts. I was under the impression that Luke and a proto-Acts (chapters 1-24 only) may have been written while Paul was in prison in Caesarea (AD 58-60). But after more careful analysis of the target audience for Luke (and Acts especially), it seems more likely that Luke-Acts were not put in their present form until AD 61-62. All the trials and court-cases that are mentioned in the book of Acts would have set good legal precedents for a Roman court, especially the dismissal of Paul's case by **Gallio** in Corinth (Acts 18), who was the **brother of Seneca** (the childhood tutor of Nero, and Nero's chief advisor at the time of Paul's trial in Rome (AD 62-63). Those court cases mentioned in Acts would have had little value in a Judean courtroom, but they would weigh heavy in the scales of Nero's court in Rome.

Philo of Alexandria, an older contemporary of Paul, went to Rome to plead the case of the Alexandrian Jews before Caligula (AD 40). At least two books were written in connection with his trip to Rome: *Flaccus* (AD 40) and *Embassy to Gaius* (not long after AD 40). Luke and Paul may have been aware of those writings and used their style (especially the treatise on *Flaccus*) to compose Luke-Acts, which was addressed to a Gentile audience in Rome. If there are any comparison studies of Philo and Paul, they would be worth reading. It might provide additional external support for an AD 61-62 date for Luke and Acts.

Following are some helpful resources (articles and books) from other advocates of Matthean Priority, which take a little different approach to the Synoptic Problem, but are worth reading nevertheless:

Traditional Augustinian Hypothesis [Matthew-Mark-Luke model]

Matthew first, Mark second, Luke third, each successively dependent (Augustine; Grotius 1640; Jameson 1922; Butler 1951; Wenham 1992). Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* (c. 400); H. Grotius, *Annotationes in libros evangeliorum* (Amsterdam, 1641); H. G. Jameson, *The Origin of the Synoptic Gospels* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1922); B. C. Butler, *The Originality of St. Matthew* (Cambridge: UP, 1951); J. Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark & Luke* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1992). This bibliographic info found here: http://www.hypotyposeis.org/synoptic-problem/2004/09/overview-of-proposed-solutions.html#Butler%201951

Matthean Priority by Daniel L. Akin:
[Article written by Dr. Daniel L. Akin. "The Order of the Gospels (**The Synoptic Problem**), Accounts of the Resurrection." *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville: Holman, 1992)] Found here: https://www.truelife.org/articles/the-synoptic-problem

"What are the arguments in favor of Matthean Priority?" By Frank Luke
[From an article entitled: "What are the arguments in favor of Matthean Priority?" By Frank Luke] Found here: http://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/1366/what-are-the-arguments-in-favor-of-matthean-priority

Article entitled: "Farmer's Argument for Matthean Priority" Edited by Geoff Trowbridge.
Found here: http://www.maplenet.net/~trowbridge/farmer.htm
[Editorial note - The sixteen main points of William R. Farmer's argument, as well as many of the examples and elaborations, have been lifted verbatim from his book, The Synoptic Problem, Mercer Univ. Press, 1981. However, I have freely reworded and reworked many details where appropriate for the sake of brevity. For a full appreciation of Farmer's work, consult the aforementioned book, or his more recent The Gospel Of Jesus, Westminster John Knox Press, 1994 - G.T.]
Farmer puts the three synoptics in this order: Matthew, Luke, then Mark.

Three Good Sources on the Synoptic Problem from an Evangelical Perspective:
- David Alan Black and David R. Beck (editors). *Rethinking the Synoptic Problem*. Grand Rapids, Michigan USA: Baker Academic, 2001.
- James Breckenridge. *Evangelical Implications of Matthean Priority* (article). Found in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (*JETS*) 26/1 (March 1983) pp. 117-121. He argues for Matthean priority from a conservative evangelical framework while keeping the results and input of form criticism clearly in mind.
- David Laird Dungan. *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels*. New York City, NY USA: Doubleday, 1999.
- John Wenham. *Redating Matthew, Mark & Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem*. Downers Grove, IL USA: Intervarsity Press, 1992.

Galatians: Three Possible Dates (AD 49-55)

As we noted, opinions about the date of the epistle of Galatians vary widely. They range from **AD 49** just before Paul's second missionary journey (suggested by Frank Viola), to **AD 51-52** while Paul was in Philippi or Corinth on his second journey (my view), or as late as **AD 55** while Paul was in Ephesus on his third journey (advocated by Arthur Ogden).

Those who read my *First Century Events* manuscript will notice that the date of Galatians was not pinpointed. Two possible dates were given: AD 53 and AD 55. Since that was written, however, a lot more study has been done to tighten the range of possible dates. Below are the results of that study:

It is important to keep the dates for the three missionary journeys and the Jerusalem Council clearly in mind as we look at the possible dates for Galatians. Here is how we are sequencing these events that are mentioned here in Acts and Galatians:

Acts 14 – First Missionary Journey (AD 45-48)
Gal. 2:11ff – **Peter visits Antioch and Judaizers come** (AD 48-49)
Acts 15 & Gal. 2:1-10 – **Jerusalem Council** (AD 49)
Acts 15-18 – Second Missionary Journey (AD 49-54)
Acts 18-21 – Third Missionary Journey (AD 54-58)

Barnes Notes (commentary): Chrysostom says it was written just before the epistle to the Romans (AD 57-58). Theodoret and Lightfoot thought it was written at Rome during his imprisonment there (AD 61-63). However, there are many good reasons why such a late date is simply not possible, which we will look at here. Tertullian and Epiphanius both believed this was the earliest of Paul's epistles (i.e. before the Thessalonian correspondence was written in AD 52-53). Dr. Benson builds on that idea, by arguing that it was written while Paul was at Corinth the first time for a year and a half in AD 51-53 (see Acts 18:1-11). I tend to agree with Benson on that.

I. Early Date – AD 49 (Frank Viola)

A. Viola, in his book, *The Untold Story of the New Testament Church*, pp. 82-85, says Paul wrote Galatians sometime **after** his first missionary journey while he was still in Antioch, but **before** the second journey, and even **before** the council in Jerusalem. This would indeed make it the very first epistle that Paul wrote.

B. Viola's arguments look plausible at first glance, but when they are examined in light of the following two phrases, the early date becomes problematic and improbable:

1. "so quickly deserting" (Gal. 1:6 NAS95) – There would not be much surprise, nor such an intense reaction by Paul, if he had not yet visited the second time. It was on his second visit (AD 49-50) that he delivered the decrees from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 16:4; cf. Acts 15:20 and 15:28f). If the Galatian churches had not yet seen those decrees, then Paul's strong rebuke here would have been improper. This means he could not have written this any time BEFORE the council, or before he had visited the Galatians the second time and delivered the decrees to them. This strong rebuke necessarily implies that they already knew about the decrees and chose to ignore them.
2. "the first time" (Gal. 4:13 NAS95) – This implies Paul had already visited the Galatian churches at least twice, before he wrote the epistle of Galatians. Evidently Viola did not notice this point, even though he is otherwise very focused on the historical background behind the text. This phrase absolutely negates the idea that Galatians was written before the Jerusalem Council and Paul's second missionary journey. It forces a date after Paul's visit to them at the beginning of his second journey.

C. However, Viola takes a position on the **visit of Peter to Antioch** (mentioned in Gal. 2:11-14) which is worth very serious consideration. He dates Peter's trip to Antioch **before** the coming of the Judaizers to Antioch, and thus also **before** the Jerusalem Council (Viola, p. 82-91). This means that a **flashback** must be inserted at Gal. 2:11 after it had just talked about the Jerusalem council in the previous verses (Gal. 2:1-10). I likewise struggled to understand how this visit of Peter and the Judaizers to Antioch could have occurred after the Jerusalem Council. It was refreshing to see that someone else had noticed the problem and suggested a flashback solution to it. This very problem is the reason why so many interpreters have been forced to say that the meeting in Jerusalem mentioned in Galatians 2 could not be the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. However, instead of using a flashback to push the visit of Peter prior to the Council, they invented another earlier council in Jerusalem to resolve the chronological conflict. But all of us see the problem of having Peter's visit occurring after the Council. That would make Peter out to be a very fickle and forgetful hypocrite, after clearly and strongly defending Gentile freedom at the Jerusalem Council. And it would make the activities of the Judaizers much more transparent and radical after the Council than they were before the council. That simply is not credible. The simplest and best solution (Occam's razor) is to insert the flashback at Gal. 2:11, as Viola has done. This makes all the puzzle pieces fit together nicely. Unfortunately, most interpreters have overlooked this solution.

This is not the only time Paul has ever used a flashback in his historical narratives. It was a common literary device, employed by almost all ancient historical writers, and even by writers today. Josephus is a good example of this. He has flash-forwards and flashbacks sprinkled throughout all of his narratives (especially in the *Wars*). Students of Josephus have to constantly keep that in mind as we try to reconstruct a chronological sequence of events from his writings. Those of us living in the twenty-first century, after the advent of personal computers and the development of word processing software, have a hard time understanding why the ancient writers had so many flashbacks and flash-forwards in their writings. Writing surfaces (papyrus and parchment) were extremely expensive. They could not afford to waste a page of it. And it was extremely time-consuming to wash off (blot out) a whole page of a scroll and re-write a sequence in chronological order. It was much easier to do what the Biblical writers and Josephus did. Simply insert a flashback and go onward with the narrative.

Next, we will look at the late date of Galatians that is advocated by Arthur Ogden in his excellent book, *The Development of the New Testament*.

II. Late Date – AD 54-55 (Arthur Ogden)

His main argument is that Paul could not have heard about the Judaizer controversy while he was in Greece on his second journey, and that he more likely heard about it while he was at Ephesus on his third journey.

Ogden has suggested that Galatians was written later after Paul had visited Galatia on his third journey, and while he was at Ephesus (AD 55). Ephesus was a lot closer to the churches of Galatia than Athens or Corinth, so it would have been easier for Paul to hear about the Galatian shakeup if he was nearby in Ephesus. However, if he was so close to them, why didn't he simply go over there and straighten things out in person, or send one of his traveling companions? The fact that he sent an epistle instead, suggests that he was too far away to go himself or send one of his associates. Paul usually wrote letters to churches that were separated from him by a considerable distance, and at a time when he was not able to go visit them.

It would not have been difficult for Paul to have heard about the Galatian problem while he was at Corinth on his second journey (AD 51-53) and wrote to them at that time, since he was stationed there for a year and a half. A controversy over circumcision at Galatia would have been much more likely in AD 51, than three years later after they had been firmly established by three visits of Paul. The fact that Paul marvels about their "so quick" disturbance (Gal 1:6) after he had been there, implies an earlier date, such as the middle date in AD 50-51.

III. Middle Date – AD 50-51 (Zahn, and others, including this author)

A. The phrase "so quickly deserting" points to AD 50-51 date: The major reason I tend to date it early (before AD 54) is because of Paul's statement that he was amazed that the Galatians were "so quickly deserting" the true gospel for a different gospel (Gal. 1:6). This points to a time when the Judaizer controversy had not completely died down, such as would have been the case at the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey during which he and Silas had delivered the decrees from the Jerusalem Council to all the churches of Galatia. Paul's amazement at their "so quickly deserting" would not make much sense in the mid-50's when the Judaizer controversy was much less acute. The fact that the Galatians were still having major problems with it points to the AD 49-51 timeframe when the controversy was still raging. The Galatians were the first ones beyond Antioch to receive the Jerusalem decrees (in AD 49-50). That should have settled the issue for them, but the Judaizers came there right after Paul had left, and they confused the Galatians. A number of the Galatians must have capitulated, causing those who did not accept circumcision to write a letter or send a messenger to tell Paul what was happening. Evidently the courier connected fairly quickly with Paul, or some of his associates, since Paul indicates that their departure was "so soon" after he had been there. All of this fits his second journey really well, especially in the first year or so of it. And that would put him in either Philippi or Corinth at the time he heard about the Galatian problem. He did not stay in Philippi for very long, but it was long enough to write one short letter like Galatians. He was in Corinth for a year and a half, which would have been plenty of time to write some letters, not only to Galatia (AD 50-51), but also two other letters to the church at Thessalonica (AD 52-53).

B. Which Council in Jerusalem is Gal. 2:1-10 talking about? There is a significant historical problem here in Galatians 2. Notice in Gal. 2:1-3 that Paul mentions **Titus** as going along with Paul and **Barnabas** to Jerusalem for the meeting with the apostles. This trip to Jerusalem could not have occurred any earlier than AD 50, since Paul tells us in chapter one that he first visited Jerusalem after his 3 years in Arabia, but not again until 14 years later (3 + 14 = 17 years, added to 32 AD becomes AD 49). This forces the issue in Galatians 2. Either it is talking about the trip to the Jerusalem Council, or we would have to believe that there was another later trip to Jerusalem to discuss the same things and get another decision from the apostles and elders there. Any subsequent trip does not fit into Paul's travel itinerary, nor can we believe that the decisions of the first council were not sufficient, forcing Paul, Barnabas, and Titus to go to Jerusalem again.

C. More evidence that the Gal. 2 trip to Jerusalem was the Jerusalem Council trip (Acts 15): There is no record in Acts (or in any other epistle) of any meeting in Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas and Titus before the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Nor would it have been possible for Titus to have been present at an earlier meeting, since he did not join Paul's traveling companions until the first missionary journey. This meeting mentioned in Galatians 2, therefore, has to be the Jerusalem Council, since it clearly could not have included Titus before that, nor could it have included

Barnabas after that. As we know, Barnabas no longer traveled with Paul after their disagreement at the beginning of Paul's second journey. Since Galatians 2:1-10 mentions both Titus and Barnabas going to Jerusalem with Paul, it forces the date of this council to be after the first journey and before the second journey. That is exactly where Acts 15 places it! Philip Schaff, in his multi-volume *History of the Christian Church*, agrees that Galatians 2 must be speaking of the Jerusalem Council.

D. We must remember that Paul and Barnabas were not working together after the beginning of the second missionary journey (AD 49). So, this trip to Jerusalem by Paul, Barnabas, and Titus, appears to force the date of Galatians after the Jerusalem council for sure. Since the trip to the Jerusalem council (AD 49) was obviously past when Paul wrote, it fixes AD 49 as the earliest possible date of writing.

E. The mention of **Titus** here in Galatians 2:3 is another proof that the trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 2) was the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). The first mention of Titus by name in our New Testament is in Gal. 2:3, and by implication in Acts 15:2 (since Titus was one of the "some others" who went to Jerusalem with Paul). This trip was in AD 49, after they had returned from the first missionary journey and had "spent a long time" with the Antioch brethren (Acts 14:28).

Evidently Titus was a trophy of Gentile conversion from the first missionary journey which Paul wished to take with him to Jerusalem to showcase the fruit of his missionary activity, and to serve as a test case in the dispute over circumcision. This strongly implies that Titus was not a resident of Antioch, but rather a convert from the regions where Paul and Barnabas had just preached the gospel on their first journey. Mentioning Titus to the Galatians (Gal. 2:3) would mean something to them, since Titus was from a nearby region, and thus shared their Greek culture and uncircumcised status. And Titus was representing them as a test case at the Council in Jerusalem.

However, it does not seem that Titus was from the Galatian churches, but rather from one of the other cities through which Paul passed on his way back to Antioch after leaving the Galatian region. The reason I say this is because Paul provides a little introduction to Titus when he says that "he was a Greek" (meaning that he was not a circumcised Jewish believer). If Titus had come from the Galatian region, they would already have known that Titus was an uncircumcised Greek. This shows that Titus must not have joined Paul and his companions until after Paul left the Galatian region, and started on his return journey back to Antioch of Syria. Whatever the Gal. 2 trip to Jerusalem is, it cannot have occurred before the end of Paul's first missionary journey, since it mentions Titus going along with Paul and Barnabas, and Titus would not have been with Paul until after the first missionary journey.

F. The mention of **Barnabas** going to Jerusalem with Paul also proves that this trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 2) must be the Jerusalem Council trip (Acts 15). At the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey, Barnabas separated from him and took Mark with him to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). This means that whatever trip to Jerusalem Paul shared with Barnabas must have occurred before the beginning of the second missionary journey.

G. So, now we have proof from Gal. 2 itself, that the trip to Jerusalem mentioned here, absolutely must be the Jerusalem Council trip mentioned in Acts 15. Here is the logic for that:

Major Premise 1: Titus went to Jerusalem with Paul, but he was not available to do that until after they returned from the first missionary journey (AD 48).
Minor Premise 1: Barnabas went to Jerusalem with Paul, but he could not have done that after the beginning of the second missionary journey (AD 49).
Conclusion 1: This means that whatever the Gal. 2 trip to Jerusalem was, it had to have occurred between the end of Paul's first missionary journey (AD 48) and the beginning of his second one (AD 49). Furthermore:

Major Premise 2: Acts 15:2 tells us that "Barnabas and some others" went with Paul to the Jerusalem Council after they returned from first journey (AD 48).
Minor Premise 2: Acts 15:36 shows that the Jerusalem Council occurred before Paul and Barnabas separated at the beginning of the second journey (AD 49).
Conclusion 2: This means that the trip to the Jerusalem Council mentioned in Acts 15 occurred between the end of Paul's first missionary journey (AD 48) and the beginning of his second one (AD 49). Furthermore:

Major Premise 3: The Galatians 2 trip, and the Acts 15 trip occurred within the same short time frame (between the first and second missionary journeys).

Minor Premise 3: Acts 14-15 does not mention, nor allow for the possibility of two different major trips of Paul, Barnabas, and "some others" (incl. Titus) from Antioch to Jerusalem during that short time frame (AD 48-49).

Conclusion 3: Finally, therefore, we have to conclude that the trip to Jerusalem mentioned in Gal. 2 must be the same exact trip to the Jerusalem Council that is mentioned in Acts 15.

H. Paul says it was because of a **"weakness of the flesh"** (serious bodily illness or injury) that he preached to the Galatians on his first visit. Indeed, it was on his first visit to Lystra (one of the cities of the Galatian region) where **he was stoned unconscious, dragged out of the city, and left for dead** (Acts 14:19). Shortly afterwards he came back to consciousness and returned to the city with the disciples. However, there is no indication that he was fully recovered from that stoning. Then he went to nearby Derbe, another city in the Galatian region. Evidently, he still had a serious "weakness of the flesh" (resulting from the stoning) when he preached to the folks in Derbe. He was still bruised and injured. Furthermore, Paul implies that the "weakness of the flesh" had something to do with his eyes, when he says, "if possible you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me" (Gal. 4:14-15). It would be no surprise to find out that the **stoning in Lystra may have affected his eyesight**. In fact, it would be more surprising if it had not. This tells us which journey was "the first time" he was there (Paul's first missionary journey).

I. Galatians was **written after two or more visits** of Paul to Galatia. Notice in Gal. 4:12-15 that Paul mentions their extremely hospitable relationship with him **"the first time"** he visited them (when he had the "weakness of the flesh"). This implies that he had been there more than once before he wrote this epistle to them. We know from the book of Acts that Paul visited the Galatian churches on all three missionary journeys (Acts 13-14; 16:1-6; 18:23). The use of the phrase "first time" implies that he had been there more than once before he wrote, and that his last visit was at least his second missionary journey or later. That means that Frank Viola's early date theory (before the second missionary journey) simply can not be right.

J. Paul's "amazement" at their "so quick desertion" (Gal. 1:6) implies that he was writing **soon after he had visited there** (on his second journey). Paul would not be as "surprised" at the Galatians deserting his gospel if it had been a long time since he was there. His alarm came because of the rapidity of their departure "so soon" after he had been there. This only makes sense if his visit there had been recent. Anything over two years would not be recent enough. That implies that his visit to the Galatian churches was less than two years before he wrote, and more probably closer to a year or less. Otherwise, his amazement over their "so quickly deserting" would not be so surprising.

K. Furthermore, this phrase **"so quickly" does not fit the third journey** (Gal. 1:6). It would be difficult to believe that the Galatian churches still had not understood the circumcision issue at so late a date as AD 54, after three visits of Paul, and after having the Jerusalem decrees in their possession for four years. That would not be a very "quick" desertion. It would be much more reasonable to date it soon after his second visit there at the beginning of his second journey (AD 50-51), soon after he had delivered the decrees. After Paul left, the Judaizers could have swooped in quickly and unsettled things. This explains Paul's amazement at their so quick desertion. This provides a date for Galatians sometime soon after Paul's second visit there (AD 50-51).

L. Ogden (pp. 24-25) reminds us that Paul spent "many days" in Philippi (AD 50-51) on his second journey (Acts 16:18), which could have been as much as three months or more. Furthermore, Luke stayed behind in Philippi when Paul and Silas moved on to Thessalonica. Luke was a scribe. His location there in Philippi would have enabled him to act as a hub for any couriers that traveled between Macedonia and Turkey. It is possible that the news about the Galatian disturbance by the Judaizers could have reached Paul while he was still in Philippi. Depending on how long "many days" was, it is certainly possible that Paul could have written the Galatian epistle from Philippi (AD 50-51), before he went to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth (AD 51-52). Since Luke remained in Philippi, he could easily have intercepted the couriers coming from Galatia and relayed their message on to Paul in either Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, or Corinth. We do not know how soon (AD 50) or late (AD 52) Paul received the news from Galatia, but we can be pretty sure that it occurred either while Paul was there in Philippi (AD 50), or afterwards while Luke remained there to relay messages to Paul wherever he was in Macedonia or Greece at the time (AD 51-52).

Conclusions on Date of Galatians:

Above we have seen that Galatians could not have been written before the second journey (AD 49), nor after the third visit there (AD 54-55). This means that it had to be written sometime between his second visit (AD 49) and his third visit (AD 54). Even more precisely, it had to be written "so quickly" after his recent visit there, which could only be his second missionary journey. This would force a date somewhere in the range of AD 50-51, allowing up to a year of travel time after visiting Galatia, by which time he could have reached Corinth, where he would have had the time and opportunity to write the letter.

We might legitimately ask how Paul could have heard so quickly about the Galatian situation (in western Turkey) from his location in Philippi (Macedonia) or Corinth (Greece), more than 500 miles away by land or sea? If the couriers followed Paul's footsteps through Turkey to Macedonia, they could have caught up with him in Philippi, or discovered that he had gone to Athens and Corinth. There were Christian points of contact all along the way. There was a church in Troas (where Luke had joined them). Luke was left at Philippi. Luke could have conveyed the message to Timothy and Silas in Berea, who then could have taken the message to Paul when they joined him in Corinth. Paul stayed there in Corinth long enough to write at least three letters (Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians).

Therefore, it seems to me, from this analysis of both the book of Acts and the book of Galatians, that the latest date Paul could have written Galatians, would have been from Corinth (AD 50-51) while on his second missionary journey (just after the Jerusalem Council decrees had been delivered to the Galatian churches (AD 49-50). It could just as easily have been written from Philippi just before he went to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth (AD 50-51). That is the date that I prefer.

We know that Paul delivered the decrees to Galatia on his second journey, and in the Epistle to the Galatians he marvels that they were so quickly shaken in their faith by the Judaizers. This means it was written soon after Paul had been there, probably as early as the Winter of AD 50-51 or the next Winter of AD 51-52 while he was still at Corinth. He was in Corinth for a year and a half, two Winters and the year between. The opening and closing greetings of Galatians are more similar to the two Thessalonian letters than they are with the later epistles of First and Second Corinthians.

Some have suggested that Paul could have written Galatians from Ephesus while he was on his way back from his second journey in the Spring of 53, while his boat was anchored for a short time at Ephesus (AD 53, Acts 18:19). He might have heard about the Galatian problem and wrote the letter to them before he continued on his journey by boat to Caesarea. But that would not have been "so quickly" after the problem in Galatia. Furthermore, Galatians appears to be a carefully crafted epistle written while he had plenty of time, rather than a hastily scribbled epistle while he was waiting with his bags packed to catch the next boat to Palestine. As we know from his other epistles (1 and 2 Thessalonians, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, etc.) he normally wrote letters from places where he stayed for three months or more. I don't think there is a single example of one of his letters ever being written while he was waiting a few days to catch another boat for the next leg of his journey. Paul followed a pattern in all his letter writing, and his lengthy stays at Philippi or Corinth would have given him adequate time to write it, not long after he had been in Galatia on his second journey to deliver the decrees from the Jerusalem Council.

If it was written on the second journey while Paul was either at Philippi or Corinth (AD 50-51), it would make Galatians the first epistle of Paul, followed soon afterwards by the two Thessalonian epistles.

Oct 51 – <u>Galatians</u>. It was probably the first of Paul's epistles. There was nothing quite like the Judaizer controversy that could have stirred Paul's heart to take the pen in hand and compose his first letter. The place from which it was most likely written was Philippi before Paul went to Corinth, not long after he had been in Galatia on his second journey and delivered the decrees from the Jerusalem Council. There is a debate between the early and even earlier dates of Galatians. Previously I had dated it in 53 right after first and second Thessalonians (while Paul was in Corinth). Ogden dates it in 55 while Paul was on his third journey (way too late for a Galatian Judaizer controversy). Because of Paul's amazement that the Galatians had "so soon abandoned" his gospel for the Judaizing gospel, I now prefer to date it even earlier before the Thessalonian correspondence in late 51. Not very much time had elapsed (a year or less) since Paul had been in Galatia on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6). That implies Paul was probably still in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea), before he went to Achaia (Athens and Corinth) where he wrote the two Thessalonian letters. He would not have

had much time to write Galatians before reaching Philippi, where he and Silas stayed “for many days” (Acts 16:18). Word from Galatia could easily have caught up with Paul in Philippi, at which time he would have written the Galatians epistle, in which he firmly challenged the Galatians for letting themselves be deceived by the Judaizing gospel "so soon" after he had been there.

Frank Viola, in his very interesting historical reconstruction book, *The Untold Story of the New Testament Church*, even pushes the date of writing for Galatians two years farther back than I do (i.e., to AD 49), before the second missionary journey, and even before the Jerusalem Council. This would indeed make it the very first epistle that Paul wrote, which would have been written from Antioch.

Ogden has suggested that Galatians was written later after Paul had visited Galatia on his third journey, and while he was at Ephesus (AD 55). Ephesus was a lot closer to the churches of Galatia than Philippi, Athens or Corinth, so it would have been easier for Paul to hear about the Galatian shakeup if he was in Ephesus. However, if he was so close to them, why didn’t he simply go over there and straighten things out in person, or send one of his traveling companions?

Another possibility is that while he was on his way back from his second journey in the Spring of 53, while his boat was anchored at Ephesus (AD 53, Acts 18:19), he might have heard about the Galatian problem while he was in Ephesus and wrote the letter to them before he continued on his journey by boat to Caesarea. But it appears to be a carefully crafted epistle written while he had plenty of time, rather than hastily written while he was waiting to board the boat to Palestine.

Paul usually wrote letters to churches that were separated from him by a considerable distance, and at a time when he was not able to go visit them. It would not have been difficult for Paul to have heard about the Galatian problem while he was at Philippi or Corinth on his second journey (AD 51-52) and write to them at that time. A controversy over circumcision at Galatia would have been much more likely in AD 51, than three years later after they had been firmly established by three visits of Paul. The fact that Paul marvels about their “so quick” disturbance (Gal 1:6) after he had been there, implies the earlier date (late 51).

Others have suggested that Paul might have written it soon after he reached Corinth (late 51 or very early 52) while on his second missionary journey. We know that he delivered the decrees from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) to the Galatians on his second journey, and in the Epistle to the Galatians he marvels that they were so quickly shaken in their faith by the Judaizers. This implies that it was written soon after Paul had been there, either while he was still in Philippi, or very soon after he reached Corinth in late 51 or very early 52. Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, two Winters and the year between (late 51 to early 53).

If it was written on the second journey while Paul was at Philippi, it would make Galatians the first epistle of Paul to have been written, with the two Thessalonian epistles coming soon afterwards. That is where I tend to place it, at Philippi in late AD 51.

AD 51-52 – <u>1 Thessalonians</u> written by Paul while he was at Corinth (2nd missionary journey). The church in Thessalonica was established in AD 51 - Acts 17:1-9. Acts 17:1-15; 1 Thess. 3:1-6; Acts 18:1-5. The two Thessalonian epistles were evidently written by Paul soon after his epistle to the Galatians. Some people think that Romans was the first epistle, since it is the first of Paul's epistles listed in our Bibles, but that is not the case. Paul's epistles were not arranged in the chronological order in which they were written. There were at least five other epistles written before Romans (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and 1 & 2 Corinthians). Paul’s epistles were placed more in the order of size and importance of content, rather than chronologically.

Soon after Paul arrived in Thessalonica, the Jewish community there stirred up a persecution, which threatened to kill Paul. So Paul was escorted out by his fellow Christians, and went to Berea where he found a more noble-minded group of Jewish folks.

There were some Thessalonian Christians who evidently were killed in the local persecution there, and the living Christians were worried that the dead ones would miss out on all the benefits that would come to the living saints at the Parousia. Paul reassured them that their departed loved ones would not miss out on any of the benefits, but instead would be raised first before the living got any benefits, and then together with the living and remaining saints would be caught up to be with Jesus. The living saints would be **reunited** with their resurrected loved ones at the Parousia when both the resurrected dead and the changed living saints were caught up together as one group to meet Jesus in the unseen spiritual realm at His Parousia. This reunion idea forces the conclusion that the living would be changed (without physical death) into the unseen realm, where they would join with the resurrected

dead to be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and then remain there with Him forever. Paul tells them to comfort one another with these words. If they had to wait until their death to be reunited, this language here about the living saints being gathered together as one group with the resurrected dead makes no sense. In order for there to be a real reunion at the Parousia with their departed loved ones, the living would have to be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-54) and caught up together with them into the presence of Christ, where they would remain forever afterwards (1 Thess. 4:17-18).

One of the more fascinating features of the two Thessalonian epistles is their similarities with Matthew's version of the Olivet Discourse (a.k.a. Matthew 24). In our comments about the date of Matthew's gospel above, we documented those similarities between Matthew 24 and 1 Thess 4-5; 2 Thess 2. Those connections are numerous and unmistakable, leaving little room for doubt that Matthew's gospel was written and in circulation before Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in AD 51-53.

AD 52-53 – 2 Thessalonians. Paul wrote Second Thessalonians while still at Corinth (on his second missionary journey). 2 Cor. 1:19; Acts 18:18-21. He was in Corinth for a year and a half (two Winters and the year between). Knowing the date of these two epistles to Thessalonica helps tremendously in interpreting their eschatological content. Paul had taught them about a great tribulation that would usher in the Day of the Lord (Second Coming, Resurrection, Judgment).

Because the Thessalonians were experiencing a heavy persecution at that time (but it was only a local persecution, not empire-wide), they were tempted to think that the Day of the Lord must have arrived (2 Thess. 2:2). But Paul reminded them of all the things that were still yet to happen before the Day of the Lord could come.

There would first have to be an "apostasy." The commentaries are split over what this word "apostasy" (Gk. *apostasia*) means. Some think it is referring to the Great Tribulation upon the whole church scattered throughout the empire (i.e., the Neronic persecution in AD 64-66), not just a local persecution like they were experiencing there in Thessalonica in AD 51. That empire-wide persecution would tempt many to turn away from the faith (*apostatize*). There are no critical problems with that approach, since it falls within the same historical time-frame.

But others (including this writer) think this "apostasy" may be talking about the revolt of the Jews in AD 66. We point out that this word "apostasy" (Gk. *apostasia*) is translated "rebellion" or "revolt" in Josephus [e.g., *War* 7.82, 7.164, and Life 43]. Several bible translations also render it as "rebellion" or "revolt" (e.g., NET, NIV, CEB, CEV, NJB, REB, ESV, GWord, CENT, CNT, NRSV, *et al*). It is only used twice in our NT (Acts 21:21 and 2 Thess. 2:3). In Acts 21:21 the Judaizers were accusing Paul of teaching Jewish Christians outside Palestine to *abandon* (rebel against) the Mosaic Law. But here in 2 Thess. 2:2, it would make more sense in this context if it is talking about the Jewish Revolt in AD 66. The **Man of Lawlessness** (Eleazar b. Ananias) would not be revealed until after the revolt (or rebellion) began in AD 66. Sure enough, that is what literally happened with Eleazar. He was the one who blew the shofar and rallied the Zealots around himself, and used the temple as his headquarters for the rebellion. In those lawless actions, he revealed himself as the Man of Sin or Lawlessness. It was only a few months afterwards when his father (Ananias b. Nedebaeus) was killed by Menahem. His father was a restraining influence on him. Once his father was killed, there were no more restraints on his lawless character and behavior. That fits the description we see here in 2 Thess 2:6-9.

The revealing of the Man of Lawlessness had to occur before the Day of the Lord (the Parousia). Note that this epistle was written in AD 52-53, at least one year before **Nero** became Emperor (AD 54). His adopted father (Claudius) was still reigning. Some think 2 Thess 2:6-9 might be a reference to Nero's rise to power in the coming years, and that he would be the Man of Sin. That idea is made somewhat more plausible by the fact that the evil character of Nero was "restrained" by his mother Agrippina, by his marriage to Octavia, and by his two main advisors Seneca and Burrus. In order to free himself of those restraints, Nero killed his mother (AD 59) and his wife Octavia (AD 62). But it was not until the death of Octavia in AD 62, who was the only other remaining legitimate heir to the Julio-Claudian throne, that he was fully free to follow his own impulses without restraint.

However, it seems more likely that the Man of Sin was fulfilled by **Eleazar b. Ananias**, the son of the same Ananias who arrested and tried Apostle Paul in AD 58. This may shed some light on Paul's comments in 2 Thess 2 that the Man of Lawlessness would not be revealed until the revolt in AD 66. Eleazar was the instigator of that revolt. More on all this below when we get to the year AD 66.

AD 51-53 – Production of the NT canon was definitely underway. Apostle Paul got his part of it off to a great start with his first three epistles. In regard to the development of the NT canon, we need to

keep in mind the probability that Paul carried master copies of his Thessalonian and Galatian epistles with him, which he shared with the Jerusalem church and all the other churches he visited and established. As we argued above under the dates of Matthew and Mark, it seems almost certain that Paul already had access to Matthew's gospel before his second missionary journey, and probably had a copy of it with him in his collection of “books and parchments" that he carried with him on all of his journeys. Since Paul made multiple trips to Jerusalem between his various missionary journeys, it is easy to see how he could have obtained copies of Matthew's gospel at least, if not also Mark's, as well as dropped off copies of his own epistles to the apostles in Jerusalem.

This is how the NT books were written and put into circulation, not only by the missionary journeys of Paul and the other Apostles, but also by the various couriers that carried messages back and forth from the Apostles in Jerusalem to all the churches scattered throughout the Diaspora.

This procedure of carrying master copies (exemplars) of the NT books with them, from which the churches could make their copies, sheds a lot of light on the development, distribution, and formation of the NT canon. It shows how the writings got spread throughout the whole Roman world and Diaspora before the Neronic persecution and the rapture removed all the Christians from the scene. It also explains how so many copies of those manuscripts were scattered all over the Roman world.

As the couriers made their rounds to the churches, they would read those epistles and gospels to the congregation, and then have their in-house scribes or local scriptorium make a copy for them to keep. In some cases, Luke or Mark (both of whom were scribes) might have made copies for the church while they were there. Papyrus and parchment writing materials were very expensive, so the congregations probably had to pool their resources in order to buy enough of them to make the copies.

Think about this process of copying which was done under the supervision of the apostles or their trusted companions (like Luke or Mark). If the scribes were tired, distracted, or under tight deadline pressure, it would have been easy for them to make mistakes. Then, if that second generation copy was used as an exemplar from which to make third generation copies, not only would it have the mistakes made by the second generation scribes, but would include additional errors made by the third generation, and so on. Therefore, it should not surprise us that the copyists made errors. It is a wonder that they did not make more mistakes than they did.

Furthermore, since the apostles were right there with the scribes as they were making the copies, they could easily have made emendations to the text which explained the text or corrected the copyist mistakes. Some of the additions and omissions that we credit to later scribes, could easily have been approved by the apostles themselves as they supervised the production of more copies from their master exemplars.

We will all be amazed when we find out how all those textual variant readings actually occurred. I hope we get to see an instant replay of that when we get to heaven, or at least talk to the apostles and have them explain how it was done. It will be Scripture-vindicating and Christ-glorifying.

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey (AD 54-58)

AD 54 – Paul began his *Third Missionary Journey* (AD 54-58). After Paul revisited the Galatian and Phrygian regions "strengthening the disciples" (Acts 18:23), he went to Ephesus, where he stayed for about three years (Acts 20:31), at which time he composed the epistle of **First Corinthians**. He sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he stayed in Ephesus. Gaius and Aristarchus remained there with Paul in Ephesus.

It is important to remember that Paul began his third journey in the Spring or Summer of AD 54 just before Claudius Caesar died and his adopted son Nero took the throne (Oct. 13, AD 54). The death of Claudius and the rise of Nero is significant for Christianity in a lot of ways. We will point out some of that as we go through the details of Paul's third journey.

When Paul came to Ephesus he found a dozen disciples who were only acquainted with the baptism of John (like Apollos had been). Paul taught them about the Holy Spirit, then re-baptized them "into the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). This implies that baptism into the Name of the Lord Jesus was extremely important. Perhaps Christians today need to take a more serious look at baptism.

We should note here that baptism and the Lord's Supper were both commanded to Gentiles, not just Jews. This is extremely significant, since Paul was very adamant about NOT binding upon the Gentiles anything which was destined to pass away at AD 70. The jots and tittles of the Law were bound ONLY upon Jewish Christians, and only until the Law passed away at AD 70. But the Law was

not bound upon the Gentile Christians. Therefore, it seems obvious that the things Paul bound upon the Gentile Christians MUST have been intended to continue in the church of all generations to come.

Furthermore, it was not just baptism and the Lord's Supper which was commanded to the Gentile Christians. The organizational structure of the church, including a plurality of elders and deacons, seems also to have been the pattern that Paul followed in all the churches that he established in the Gentile world (Acts 14:23). The implication is quite strong that Paul was setting a precedent and pattern for the church to follow for all ages to come.

One of the helpful connections to notice is the mention of Aquila and Priscilla being in Corinth on Paul's second journey (Acts 18:2), having come there from Rome, after Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome in AD 50 (Acts 18:2). Next we saw them go to Ephesus with Paul, where he left them and headed to Jerusalem for the feast (Acts 18:18-21). When Paul came to Ephesus on his third journey (late 54 or early 55 AD), Aquila and Priscilla were still there hosting a church in their home, with whom Paul sent greetings to the church in Corinth. However, news of the death of Claudius must have reached Ephesus about that time, and so it seems that Aquila and Priscilla must have left there and returned to Rome, where we find them two or three years later near the end of Paul's third journey, as he greeted them in his epistle to the church in Rome (Rom. 16:3-4).

This narrative about Aquila and Priscilla helps us date the end of the second and the beginning of the third journeys. We know the exact date of the death of Claudius (Oct 13, AD 54). After that time, it would have been safe for Aquila and Priscilla to return to Rome. They evidently did not leave Ephesus and return to Rome until after Paul arrived there (late 54 or early 55 AD) and after he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians (AD 56-57).

After Paul left Ephesus he went to Macedonia and Achaia. His traveling companions are listed in Acts 20:4. From Ephesus he traveled to Philippi in Macedonia (where he wrote **Second Corinthians**), and then to Corinth in Achaia (where he wrote the epistle to the **Romans**). Then he returned back through Philippi and then to Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Miletus (where he met with the Ephesian elders), Cos, Rhodes, Patara, past Cyprus to Tyre, Ptolemais, and to Caesarea. From there he traveled by land up to Jerusalem where he was arrested. This journey from start to finish lasted about four years (Spring of AD 54 until Spring of 58). Here is the sequence of his journey, including the places he visited and the approximate amount of time he stayed at each place:

(1) Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23) – probably **a few months**
(2) Ephesus synagogue (arrived while Apollos was at Corinth) – three months
(3) Ephesus teaching in school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10) – two years
(4) Ephesus riot over idolatry (Acts 19:23-41) – sometime after the two years – see Acts 20:31 where Paul says he spent a total of "**three years**" there (AD 54-57)
(5) Macedonia (Acts 20:1) – a few weeks?
(6) Greece (Corinth - Acts 20:2-3) – spent **three months (the Winter)**
(7) Macedonia (Acts 20:3-6) – Paul & Luke left Philippi **after Passover (AD 58)**
(8) Troas (Acts 20:5-6) – voyage from Philippi to Troas took five days, then they stayed seven days in Troas
(9) Assos (Acts 20:13-14) – few days
(10) Mitylene (Acts 20:14) – few days
(11) Chios (Acts 20:15) – one day
(12) Samos (Acts 2015) – one day
(13) Miletus (Acts 20:15) – a few days (where he called the Ephesian elders to him)
(14) Cos, Rhodes, and Patara (Acts 21:1) – a few days
(15) Tyre (Acts 21:2-3) – several days voyage, plus stayed seven days in Tyre
(16) Ptolemais (Acts 21:7) – a few days voyage, plus one day at Ptolemais
(17) Caesarea (Acts 21:8-14) – one day voyage from Ptolemais, then stayed "for some days" at Caesarea before going up to Jerusalem
(18) Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-17) – a few days pilgrimage trip from Caesarea to go to the Pentecost celebration. Paul and company traveled with some of the saints from Caesarea who went up to the feast of Pentecost with him. This is when Paul was arrested, and spent the next two years in prison in Caesarea, until he appealed to Caesar and was sent to Rome.

AD 54 – Wars and Rumors. The Parthians invaded Armenia (Tacitus, *Annals*). News of this reached Nero, and he ordered neighboring regions to raise an army and push the Parthians back out. This is significant in the sense that it shows there were **wars and rumors of wars** going on throughout this period leading up to the Jewish revolt, not only here in Palestine, but all over the Roman and Persian empires. And these wars and rumors keep getting more frequent and intense, just like birth-pangs (labor pains) as it got closer to AD 66 and the outbreak of war in Judea. There had already been a near breakout of a Jewish war with Rome in AD 39-41 when Caligula threatened to put his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem. Fortunately, he died before the command was ever carried out, but there definitely would have been a war with the Jews if those orders had been carried out.

AD 54 – More rumors of war. False Christs and False Prophets. Felix supposedly hired Sicarii dagger-men to kill former **High Priest Jonathan**, simply because Jonathan was a conservative and was always exhorting Felix to live righteously. Felix did not like the message, so he killed the messenger, using the Sicarii to do his dirty work [*Antiq.* 20.162-164 (20.8.5)]. From this time onward, Jerusalem began to get more and more infested with this same kind of assassination activity. At every feast, the Jewish leaders hired the Sicarii to sneak in among the crowds of festival pilgrims to stealthily kill their rivals and enemies, sometimes right there in the temple itself, thus defiling the temple with human blood. Felix used force and executions to suppress the various uprisings that were popping up all over the landscape (*Antiq.* 20.164-172). Some **false prophets** (deceivers) made matters worse by gathering followers and leading them out into the desert, suggesting that God would show them signs of their soon deliverance. But Felix sent cavalry and foot soldiers to crush them. Felix tricked one of the rebel leaders, **Eleazar b. Dinaeus**, to come meet with him, promising him that he would do no harm to him, but when he came, Felix bound him and sent him to Rome where some harm did come to him [*Antiq.* 20.160-161 (20.8.5) and *War* 2.253 (2.13.2)].

Oct 13, 54 – Death of Claudius (ruled AD 41-54). Apostle Paul was in Ephesus at the time Claudius died. According to Josephus, he "administered the government thirteen years, eight months, and twenty days" [*Antiq.* 20:148-153 (20.8.1-2) and *War* 2:248 (2.12.8)]. Reports by Roman historians (Seneca and Suetonius) suggest that Agrippina the Younger (the mother of Nero, and fourth and last wife of Claudius) poisoned Claudius and bribed the military commanders to proclaim her son Nero as emperor (instead of Brittanicus, the real son of Claudius). Dio Cassius, Tacitus, and Josephus all mention the death of Claudius. [*Dio* 60.34] [Tacitus, *Annals* 12.69] [Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.8.1 (20.148)] [See also Warmington, *Nero Reality and Legend*, pp. 17-19]

Oct 13, 54 – Nero began his reign as emperor at 17 years old. Reigned AD 54-68. [*Antiq.* 20:148-150 (20.8.1)] Nero's real name was *Lucius Domitius Aenobarbus*. In Ken Gentry's book, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, in footnote 16 on page 49 he tells us that, "...Nero's name was Domitius Nero..." In this section of Gentry's book, he mentions the confusion that Irenaeus had regarding his mention of Domitian in connection with John's writing of the book of Revelation.

Gentry also talks about Nero's original name in his book, *The Beast*, on pages 14-15, where he says, "...*Lucius Domitius Aenobarbus*, better known by his adoptive name, Nero Caesar. ...The father of Nero was *Enaeus Domitius Aenobarbus* ... mother was Agrippina, the sister of Emperor Gaius (Caligula) and niece of the emperor Claudius. Nero was born on Dec. 15th, AD 37, just nine months after the death of Emperor Tiberius...(the name "Aenobarbus" meant "red-beard")." Nero was born the same year as Josephus. [See Warmington, *Nero Reality and Legend*]

There are several scholars who believe that Irenaeus was referring to Nero when he said that John was still alive toward the end of the reign of "Domitianou." This is an adjective form of Domitius (Nero's family name) and not the nominative form of Domitian's name (which would instead be "Domitianikos"). If it was a reference to "Domitian" it would most likely follow the form of proper names which had the definite article. Since Irenaeus does not use the definite article, it would seem more likely that he is referring to a family name (Domitius) rather than to the more formal imperial name. [*Antiq.* 20:149-150 (20.8.1)]; cf. Gentry *BJF*, p. 49 note 16, and *Beast of Revelation*, pp. 14-15.

As we noted above, even before Nero began his reign, Judea already had a lot of problems with bandits, false prophets, and rebels. And it only got worse as time progressed toward the open rebellion in AD 66.

Apostle Paul was in Ephesus on his third journey at the time Nero ascended the throne in Rome.

AD 55 – Aristobulus (son of Herod of Chalcis) received the kingdom of Lesser Armenia from Nero. **Agrippa II** received four more cities from Nero: Tiberias and Tarichea (in Galilee), plus Abila and Julias (in Iturea beyond the Jordan). This territory encompassed fourteen villages. [*Antiq.* 20.8.4 (20.158-159); *War* 2.13.2]

AD 56 – Barnabas left Cyprus for a brief visit to other churches (Corinth and maybe Rome). When he returned from that journey, he wrote his epistle to them (AD 56-57). See the Masters Thesis of Edward E. Stevens which deals with all of this in greater detail (*Redating the Epistle of Barnabas*).

AD 56 – The Egyptian and other False Prophets. During the rule of Felix the Procurator (AD 53-60) the **Sicarii**, deceivers, robbers, and some false prophets (including the Egyptian mentioned in Acts 21:38) gathered up small armed bands, plundered the countryside,- and urged a revolt. **The "Egyptian"** gathered up a small army and came to Jerusalem to oust the Romans (AD 56), but Felix sent his army and killed 400 of them, captured 200, and dispersed the rest. The Egyptian escaped, but did not appear any more. This occurred just a couple years before Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. It was still fresh on their minds. This is why the Roman commander asked Paul if he was the Egyptian (Acts 21:38). [*Antiq.* 20:164-172 (20.8.6); *War* 2:258-263 (2.13.4-6)] Here is another incidence of rumors of war. They are becoming much more frequent and intense, like labor pains.

AD 56-57 – Barnabas wrote his epistle after he returned to Cyprus from visiting some churches (Corinth and maybe Rome). This epistle of Barnabas most likely stirred up a controversy and persecution, not only for Barnabas, but for Apostle Paul and the saints in Jerusalem also. The strong anti-Judaic language in his epistle was probably part of what provoked the Jews on Cyprus to kill Barnabas (AD 60). Just before he was killed, Barnabas instructed Mark to bury him there on Cyprus with his copy of Matthew's gospel, and then go to Paul to reconcile with him and work with him. We say more about this below where we discuss the death of Barnabas (AD 60) and the writing of Paul's epistle to the *Hebrews* in AD 62-63. The Masters Thesis of Ed Stevens also deals with this (*Redating the Epistle of Barnabas*).

AD 57 – **Disturbance at Caesarea**. The city of Caesarea was almost evenly mixed in population between Jews and Greeks (or Syrians who were Greek in culture and language). Both parties wanted control of the city. The Jewish community there was more wealthy, but the Greeks were better positioned politically and in control of the prime real estate of the city. There was constant friction, which eventually came to a violent clash. The Jews gained the upper hand in the struggle, but Felix brought his forces into the marketplace and ordered the Jews to desist. When the Jews refused to stop, **Felix** sent his soldiers among them and "slew a great many of them" [*War* 2:264-270 (2.13.6-7)]. This did not end the conflict. The Jews appealed to Caesar for a definitive decision (thinking that they had Nero's favor), so Felix chose representatives from both parties to go to Rome and argue their case before Nero. Surprisingly, Nero decided in favor of the Greeks and Syrians. According to the Jewish account of it, the Greco-Syrians obtained their favorable decision from Nero by bribing Nero's secretary, Berullus. The Jews were not comfortable with this turn of events, so it is no surprise that trouble eventually flared up again in Caesarea in AD 66. According to Josephus, the later incident in AD 66 was the one of the major causes of the Zealot revolt. This example of Jews who had Roman citizenship appealing to Caesar in AD 57 must have been fresh on the minds of Felix and Festus one year later (AD 58) when Paul, imprisoned there in Caesarea, asserted those same Roman privileges against his fellow Jews [*Antiq.* 20:173-178 (20.8.7)]. We noted earlier at the end of Paul's second journey that there was not as much anti-Gentile sentiment in Jerusalem at that time (AD 53-54), as there was here at the end of his third journey (AD 57-58). The tensions in the church in Jerusalem were almost certainly increased by this violent uprising in Caesarea in AD 57, just a few months before Paul came to Jerusalem at the end of his third journey. Josephus indicates that it was this very event in Caesarea which fanned the flames of revolt. The Zealots began to be much more vocal and active at this time. Rumors of war were now in the air throughout Judea and Galilee.

Paul's Writings on His Third Journey (AD 54-58)

Early 57 – <u>1 Corinthians</u> (written at Ephesus). Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus before Pentecost (1 Cor. 16:8). Sosthenes, Aquila, and Priscilla were with Paul when he wrote 1 Cor., but Timothy was not. Aquila & Priscilla had a house church there in Ephesus at the time. Timothy was on his way to Corinth, and would then come back to Ephesus to be with Paul. Paul was coming to visit (through Macedonia first) and collect the contribution from both Macedonia and Corinth and take it to Jerusalem. Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus were in Ephesus and evidently had come there from Corinth to supply Paul with support. See 1 Cor. 16:8 and Acts 19:22. It is interesting that Paul mentions a previous letter to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Cor. 13:1-2, 10). But, for unknown reasons, that letter was not preserved and passed down to succeeding generations. So, as far as we are concerned, the epistle we call "First Corinthians" is the first of his epistles that were preserved for us. See Ogden and the commentaries for more on this.

Late 57 – <u>2 Corinthians</u> (written in Macedonia, probably at Philippi). Timothy and Titus were both with Paul when 2 Cor. was written. Titus had just been to Corinth and received support, and brought it back to Paul. And it seems from 2 Cor. 8:6 that both Titus and Timothy took this second letter back to Corinth. And Paul was planning to come to Corinth soon (which would be his third visit there). (2 Cor. 13:1) See Ogden for more on this.

Early 58 – <u>Romans</u> (written at Corinth) near the end of his third missionary journey. Paul spent three months there during the Winter of AD 57-58 (Acts 20:2-3). Present with him in Corinth were Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Erastus, Quartus, and Phoebe. Phoebe was a deaconess from Cenchrea (which was one of the two coastal cities attached to Corinth). Phoebe was leaving soon to carry this epistle to Rome, and probably traveled with a group of other Jewish Christians who were going to Rome. Paul is staying at the house of Gaius (of Corinth). This is evidently a different "Gaius" than the one who normally traveled with him (who was from Derbe). Paul sent his commendations of and greetings to Aquila and Priscilla, who were now back in Rome (Winter, early AD 58) and already had a church meeting in their house (Rom. 16:3-4).

The last notice we have of Aquila and Priscilla is in 2 Tim. 4:19 where Paul sends his greetings to them in his letter to Timothy (in Ephesus) just after he had been arrested the second time and was nearing death (AD 63-64). How and when and why they went back to Ephesus after being in Rome is unknown. They were tent-makers by trade, and their occupation may have prompted them to go there.

Paul had already written three epistles on his second journey (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians). Then Paul wrote three more epistles while he was on this third journey (1 & 2 Corinthians, and Romans). This makes a total of six books written so far (by AD 58). The other eight epistles of Paul (for a total of fourteen) were written during and between his two imprisonments (between AD 61-64). It is also clear that Paul helped Luke write the book of Acts, no later than during the first year of Paul's imprisonment in Rome (AD 61-62). See my book, *First Century Events*, for the details on how all the NT books were written, collected and certified by the apostles, and circulated among the churches.

Paul is satisfied that he has established the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, and is now planning a trip to Rome as soon as he finished his trip to Jerusalem to take the Gentile contribution there. Paul was almost ready to head to Jerusalem with the Gentile contributions (where he would be arrested and sent to Rome at the expense of the Roman government).

Paul's Trip to Jerusalem at the End of His Third Journey (AD 58)

April 58 – Paul headed toward Jerusalem (Acts 20:16) near the end of his third missionary journey. After writing the book of Romans from Corinth during the Winter of AD 58, Paul left on his trip back toward Jerusalem to be there in time for Pentecost (June 58 AD). He had to move rapidly in order to get back through Macedonia and Asia before sailing to Palestine. He took the contributions from the Gentile churches (Corinth, Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi) back to Jerusalem to be distributed to

the needy saints there. By **accepting this gift** from the Gentiles, the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were showing that they **accepted the Gentiles** as fellow-heirs of the kingdom (without circumcision and law-keeping). It was a way for the Gentiles to share their material wealth with the Jews, who had shared their spiritual riches with the Gentiles. This was how Jew-Gentile unity was achieved (Eph. 4), as well as how "all Israel" (true spiritual Israel) was saved (Rom. 11). The missionary efforts of Apostle Paul were extremely instrumental in grafting the Gentiles into the rich root of the Jewish Olive Tree, so that the **fullness of the Gentiles** might finally arrive, when both Jews and Gentiles inherited the kingdom together at the Parousia of Christ (Rom. 11).

This is a marvelous thing to observe here in Paul's third missionary journey. Paul took great pains to both **share the spiritual riches with the Gentiles**, and **take their material wealth back to Jerusalem to share with the Jewish saints**. This sharing (*koinonia*) of their respective riches blessed both of them, and united them together in one common faith. At the very time when the non-Christian Jews were cutting off all relationships with the Gentiles, the Jewish Christians were embracing the Gentiles and welcoming them to the Kingdom of Christ. Paul's missionary efforts were the driving force behind this merging of the Gentiles into the one body of Christ. This is what Paul was referring to in Ephesians 4 when he encouraged the Ephesian Christians and all other Christians who would read this epistle to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the **bond of peace**."

This was a very real bond of peace. All the friction between the Jewish and Gentile Christians was healed by this mutual sharing. This peace was established by each of them (Jew and Gentile) accepting the other, and becoming one in Christ, until they all (both Jew and Gentile) "attained to the unity of the faith... to a mature man ... belonging to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). This was why the apostles and elders in Jerusalem insisted that Paul "remember the poor in Jerusalem" when he went on his journeys. And Paul was delighted to raise these funds from the Gentiles, since he knew it would "seal the deal" (establish a bond of peace) between the Jews and the Gentiles. They both benefited. They became one body in Christ. The Gentiles were accepted as fellow-heirs without circumcision and law-keeping, grafting them into the rich redemptive root of the Jewish Olive Tree.

Spring 58 – Paul went back through Philippi and Troas to Miletus. After Wintering in **Corinth** at the end of his third journey, where he wrote the epistle to the Romans, Paul then returned back through **Philippi** and on to **Troas**, where young Eutychus fell out of the window and Paul raised him back to life. Then they sailed from Assos to Mitylene, Chios, Samos, and **Miletus**. It was there in Miletus that Paul called the Ephesian elders to him, and warned them about what was going to happen to them in the near future (**Acts 20:17-38**): (1) reminded them of the gospel that he preached there for three years, (2) let them know that they would never again see his face, (3) warned them to be on their guard for themselves and all the flock among whom the Lord had made them overseers, (4) savage wolves (even some of the elders) would soon attack the flock teaching perverse things to draw away disciples after them, (5) they needed to work hard in order to help the weak and build up the church there in Ephesus. Paul was bidding farewell to this church where he had spent so much time. The elders there were now responsible to keep the church pure, unified, and strong.

There will be four more epistles written to (or for the benefit of) the church in Ephesus in the coming years: *Ephesians* (AD 62), the epistle to the church in Ephesus found in the book of *Revelation* (AD 62-63), and *First and Second Timothy* (AD 63-64). This was a very important church for Paul, some of his longest, best, and hardest labors were spent there. He did not want to see that effort wasted. He sent his most cherished fellow worker (Timothy) to guide the church there until the end.

From **Miletus** (where he had met with the Ephesian elders), he then sailed onward toward Palestine (stopping at Cos, Rhodes, and Patara, then passing by Cyprus and landing at Tyre in Syria). There was a church in **Tyre** where Paul and his companions "stayed for seven days" (Acts 21:4). The brethren there "through the Spirit" kept warning Paul not to set foot in Jerusalem. Danger, danger!

Then they took another short boat hop down the coast to **Ptolemais**, where they spent one day with the brethren before completing the final leg of their voyage at Caesarea. Here in **Caesarea** they stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6. He had four mature virgin daughters who were prophetesses. One might wonder why none of the four were ever married. Perhaps it was because of the warnings of Jesus and the apostles about not getting married and having a small family at the time of the great tribulation (Matt. 24), as well as Paul's advice to the Corinthians about remaining in whatever state they were in "during the present distress" (1 Cor. 7). Luke here provides a little window of insight into how this teaching of Christ and

the apostles was actually implemented in the lives of the pre-70 church. We might add that it was totally appropriate for them to forego marriage, and "become eunuchs for the gospel's sake" in order to complete the great commission in their generation. The persecution would have drastically affected their missionary activity if they had taken a family along with them. They needed to be free of distractions and burdens so that the gospel could run freely and swiftly by their feet. That kind of lifestyle would not apply after the "great tribulation" was fulfilled, yet the Roman Catholic church missed that point and instituted the monastic orders and celibate lifestyle in later centuries, obviously unaware that the End Time and Parousia had already come and gone. Their monks and nuns are still living like the end could come at any moment. But look at the disastrous and abominable long-term effects of such a misunderstanding and distortion of Scripture (rampant homosexuality, lesbianism, child molestation, pedophilia, and other kinds of deviant and perverted behavior). If that was the only area of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice upon which the Preterist view has a beneficial impact, it would still be worth the switch. But futurism creates many more moral, ethical, and spiritual problems besides that one. Just think how much it would clean up Christianity in the eyes of the watching world if the Preterist worldview could be applied by the overwhelming majority of Christians worldwide. I presented a paper at the Evangelical Theological Society on this very subject (*Eschatology Ethics*). It is available as a PDF lesson outline. Simply email me and request it (preterist1@preterist.org).

It was here at Caesarea that Paul and his companions "stayed for some days" before going up to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. While they were there, a prophet from Judea came and took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "This is what the Jews in Jerusalem are going to do to the man who owns this belt. They will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11). When the church there and Paul's companions heard that, they began begging Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But Paul was steadfastly resigned to facing whatever awaited him at Jerusalem. Evidently there was a significant group of Christians there in Caesarea, since we see some of them travel in caravan with Paul to the feast (Acts 21:15-16). This third missionary journey of Paul lasted about four years from start to finish (Spring of AD 54 until Summer of 58).

June 58 – Paul arrived in Jerusalem and met with James and all the elders. Paul related all the wonderful things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. Then the elders of the Jerusalem church told Paul that he had been accused of teaching Jews in the Diaspora to forsake Moses, and not to circumcise their children, nor walk according to the customs.

Did you ever wonder why Paul did not agree with his accusers, and say, "Yeah, that is exactly what I am teaching, and all of you Jewish Christians here in Judea should be doing the same thing." Why does Paul deny their accusations, instead of agreeing with them? How can Paul present sacrifices in the Temple here in AD 58, which is almost thirty years after the first Pentecost? Doesn't this violate the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the Cross? Why are these Jewish Christians and Paul still sacrificing in the Temple?

This whole controversy points us back to what Jesus said in Matt. 5:17-20. There is no doubt that the Cross was the once-for-all sacrifice for sin. If Jewish Christians were still sacrificing thinking that they were getting some kind of forgiveness or justification from it, they were sadly mistaken. From the books of Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews, it is crystal clear that the Law had no power to justify in the first place. It was merely a tutor to lead them to Christ where the real justification was. So, why did the Jewish Christians continue sacrificing?

Let's suppose you were an unbelieving Jew in AD 58 while the Temple was still standing in Jerusalem. Would you listen to a Gentile who was trying to preach the gospel to you? Would you even listen to a fellow Jew who was breaking the Law of the land by not keeping the jots and tittles? Nope to both questions. This is why Jesus told them to keep every jot and tittle better than the scribes and Pharisees, so that their fellow unbelieving Jews would listen to them preaching the gospel. Their scrupulous law-keeping gave good testimony to their righteousness, and earned them a hearing. The Jews wanted to know what it was about Christianity that made Jewish Christians better Law-keepers than they were. This law-keeping by Jewish Christians "adorned the gospel" and made it attractive to the Jews. Jesus had commanded them to keep the jots and tittles for that very reason, so the gospel would not be hindered by their bad law-breaking example. The apostles all knew this principle, that Jewish Christians needed to continue keeping the Law until it was all fulfilled and passed away at the destruction of Jerusalem. They became all things to all men, in order that more would be converted. They did not bind the Law on Gentiles, since it was destined to pass away soon, but until it passed

away the Jewish Christians needed to keep it in order to attract as many Jews to Christ as possible. This is why Paul taught the Jews who lived outside Palestine to continue keeping the Law. He was not guilty of what these Jewish believers in Jerusalem were accusing him.

So the elders suggested a way for him to prove that there was no substance to those accusations, but that he himself also walked orderly keeping the Law just like his accusers did. They asked Paul to take with him four men from the Jerusalem Church who were keeping a vow, and to pay their expenses so that all five of them could have their heads shaved and be purified according to the Law. They went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them. (Acts 21:17-26) So here in AD 58 we have Paul and the Jerusalem Church still keeping the Law and still sacrificing in the temple. How can this be proper? Notice what was the accusation against Paul: that he was teaching Jews (not Gentiles) in the Diaspora (not in Israel) to forsake Moses, not circumcise their (Jewish) children, and not walk according to the (Jewish) customs. They were not accusing him of teaching the Gentiles to forsake Moses. The Gentiles were never into the Mosaic Law anyway, so they could not leave it.

The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were concerned about what Paul was teaching to their fellow Jews in the Diaspora. They thought since Paul was not teaching the Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the Law that he was also teaching the Jews in the Diaspora to no longer keep the Law and circumcise their kids and bring them up in the Jewish customs. They knew that Jesus had instructed them to keep every jot and tittle of the Law better than the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:17-20), so they would not have fellowship with Paul if he was teaching Jews (who became Christians) to forsake Moses. Paul was not guilty of that. He himself kept the Law and taught Jews in the Diaspora (who had become Christians) to continue keeping the Law (every jot and tittle of it).

It is important to note how extremely "zealous for the Law" this group of Christians were. We have seen them mentioned or alluded to in both the book of Acts and the book of Galatians. They seem to have been connected with James and the other relatives of Jesus (such as Jude and Simeon). Peter and Barnabas also had consistency problems in this regard. It is this same "zeal for the Law" that characterized the Ebionites and Nazarenes in Pella in the second century. Evidently they did not fully understand the statements of Jesus in Matt. 5:17-20 when He stated that the Law would be all fulfilled and pass away when "heaven and earth" passed away in AD 70. They kept right on requiring circumcision and law-keeping even after AD 70. Furthermore, the Ebionites and Nazarenes that were in Pella also denied the Deity of Christ. And the fact that they installed Simeon in the place of James after James was martyred in AD 62, implies that they still had an earthly kingdom concept, and wanted a fleshly descendant of David (and close relative of Jesus) to occupy the episcopal throne in Jerusalem until Jesus returned to sit on it. They also did not believe the Gentiles would inherit the Kingdom at the Parousia without being circumcised first. What does this tell us about their spiritual condition in relation to Christ? It does not look good for them. Some of the true followers of Jesus in Judea, represented by Peter and Paul, may have gone with these Judaizers to Pella "before the war" (as Eusebius suggests), but it was only the apostates that were left in Pella after the rapture of the true Christians.

Another proof of Paul's uprightness was Timothy. Because he came from a Jewish mother and grandmother, he was Jewish, but had never been circumcised before he became a Christian. Paul had him circumcised. But Paul did not have Titus circumcised, because he was a Gentile and Paul refused to bind the Law on Gentiles. Paul did not want to bring the Gentiles under bondage to something that was about to pass away. But the Jews needed to continue keeping every jot and tittle of it better than the Pharisees so that there would be no hindrance to the gospel going to the Jews. The Jews would never listen to the gospel coming from uncircumcised lips. But if it came from a Jew who kept the Law better than they did, they would be curious to hear what it is that makes Christian Jews better keepers of the Law than they were. It would make the Jews jealous and curious. They would listen. Until the Temple was destroyed and the Old Covenant swept away, the Christian Jews were to keep the Law as a good testimony to their fellow unbelieving Jews, so that the Jews would not have an excuse for rejecting the gospel.

It should come as no surprise to us that Paul encountered this challenge to his work among the Gentiles. There was a lot going on in Judea at this time which increased the tensions between Jews and Gentiles, and made it more difficult for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to associate with the Gentiles. We noticed the disturbance in Caesarea (AD 57) which polarized the anti-Gentile sentiment in Judea. Tensions were running high. That occurred less than a year before Paul landed at Caesarea

at the end of his third journey. At every city in Palestine where Paul stopped on his way to Jerusalem, the saints warned him against going to Jerusalem. The prophet Agabus made a special point to warn him about the danger that awaited him there.

It is easy to see why Paul's presence in the temple would have been so controversial. It was not just the possibility of Paul bringing uncircumcised Gentiles into the temple that bothered them. What really bothered them was the fact that he even traveled and ate with Gentiles and was not circumcising the Gentiles and teaching them to keep the whole Law. They considered Paul a law-breaker for hanging around with uncircumcised Gentiles. His presence in the temple was not welcome.

Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem and Imprisonment in Caesarea (AD 58-60)

June 58 – Paul was arrested in the Temple while he was purifying himself with the other four Christian Jews from the Jerusalem Church. Some non-Christian Jews from Turkey (Asia) who had seen Greeks traveling with Paul (e.g., Trophimus the Ephesian), assumed that Paul had brought those Gentiles with him into the Temple and thus defiled the temple (Acts 21-23). So they stirred up the crowds to drag Paul out of the temple and have him killed. But the commander of the Roman cohort brought soldiers down and rescued Paul from them. The Roman commander allowed Paul to speak to the people in Aramaic.

June 58 – The next day Paul was put on trial before the Sanhedrin with *Ananias b. Nedebaeus* as the officiating High Priest. At night after the trial the Lord Jesus stood beside Paul and told him that he would bear witness for Christ in Rome also (Acts 23:11). This is when Paul found out that he was definitely going to go to Rome to preach the gospel, even though his original plan of taking a fourth missionary journey there had been cancelled by his arrest. At the trial, Ananias lawlessly ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth. Paul said, "God is about to [Gr. mello] strike you, you whitewashed wall." (Acts 23:3) Some of the bystanders challenged Paul for saying that, and Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that HE is High Priest." Who did Paul think was High Priest at that time? Well, sure enough, Ananias was "struck dead" by the Zealot leader Menahem only eight years later at the beginning of the war with Rome (AD 66), just as Paul predicted. This Ananias b. Nedebaeus is the same "moderate" who appealed to Agrippa II to stop the war started by his own Zealot son Eleazar. Ananias was killed by the Zealot leader Menahem (Sept. AD 66), and then his son Eleazar had Menahem killed (Sept. AD 66). Was there a connection between the murder of Ananias by Zealot forces and the Parousia? Did Christ come in judgment and "strike" Ananias dead? The death of Ananias seems to have been one of the opening shots fired at the beginning of Christ's Parousia (visitation in judgment for three-and-a-half years – AD 66-70). The fact that the angelic armies were seen in the clouds (April 66) just five months before Ananias was killed (Sept 66) certainly lends credence to the idea that Christ had begun his presence to judge and avenge. We will have a lot more to say about all this when we get to AD 66.

AD 58-60 – What Kind of Resurrection was Paul preaching? During his trial in Jerusalem, Paul stated under oath that, "I am on trial for the hope and **resurrection of the dead**" (Acts 23:6; cf. 24:21), after which there erupted a dispute in the Council between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Not long after that in his trial before the Procurator Felix in Caesarea, he stated that "there is **about to be a resurrection** of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:15), and that the **Judgment was also "about to be**" (Acts 24:25). The Greek word *mello* is used in both of those verses. This closely matches Paul's preaching to the Athenians eight years earlier about God having "fixed a day in which **He is about to judge** the world" (Acts 17:31). These statements are interesting for a lot of reasons, not only because of their affirmations of imminency, but even more so in regard to the nature of this "about to be" (Gk. *mello*) *resurrection of both the righteous and wicked*. If Paul was thinking of a collective body of Jewish believers being raised out of covenantally-dead Judaism, why would he mention "both the righteous and the wicked" being raised?

Those who teach the Collective Body resurrection view have not been able to satisfactorily explain Paul's language here. If this is the same concept of resurrection that Paul preached everywhere, then he could not have been teaching a collective body resurrection concept anywhere, since it is clear here in Acts 24:15 that the resurrection would include both the righteous and the wicked. That does

not fit the collective body view, but it perfectly fits the idea of the disembodied souls of the dead being raised up out of Hades for the judgment (just like we see pictured in the Sheep and Goat Judgment in Matthew 25). This was not a collective body resurrection out of covenantal sin death for only the Christians (the righteous). This resurrection included both the righteous and the wicked. The disembodied souls of all the remaining dead ones in Hades were raised up out of Hades and judged at the Parousia, just like it teaches in Rev. 20.

Since this was the concept of resurrection that Paul preached everywhere, it means that all his epistles that mention the resurrection must also be teaching this same concept of a **resurrection of the dead out of Hades**, and NOT a collective body of Christians (i.e., the church) being raised out of sin-dead Judaism. This is an important point that we need to nail down right here in our study of Acts. It will help us later as we study all of Paul's letters in which he mentions the resurrection of the dead ones out of Hades that was about to occur at the imminent Parousia.

Paul also left the clear impression with the Pharisees in his trial at Jerusalem that he was teaching the same kind of resurrection that they believed in. He said that he was STILL (not "used to be") "a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees," and that he was "on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead," the same kind of resurrection that the Pharisees believed in (Acts 23:6). The Pharisees did not have a collective body concept of the resurrection. They instead held an individual body view. So, if Paul was teaching a collective body view, we have to charge him with deliberate deception while he was under oath and on trial. It means he knowingly deceived the Pharisees into coming to the defense of a fellow Pharisee who supposedly believed in the same kind of resurrection that they did, when in fact Paul knew that his (collective body) view was radically different. Do you see the problem here?

In all my study of the rabbinical writings (Talmud and Midrash), I have never found any evidence that any of the Pharisees ever held to a collective body view of the resurrection. They all held to an individual body view, especially when referring to a resurrection that would include both the righteous and the wicked, as Paul does here. So, unless we want to charge Apostle Paul with deliberate deception, it would be best to understand him as teaching the same kind of resurrection that the Pharisees believed in, which was definitely NOT a collective body view.

Furthermore, he said later in his defense before Agrippa that this particular view of the resurrection, which he shared in common with the Pharisees, was **the SAME promise of resurrection that God made to the patriarchs, and to which all twelve tribes hoped to attain** (Acts 26:6-8). Later in that same speech before Agrippa, Paul stated that **all of his preaching and teaching about the resurrection (and everything else) came straight out of the Old Testament prophets and Moses** (Acts 26:22-23). This means that the Pharisee view of the resurrection (the Individual Body View) must have been the view that was taught throughout the Old Testament, otherwise Paul is not only guilty of deceiving the Pharisees, but falsely teaching King Agrippa II as well, who knew what the Old Testament prophets taught (see Acts 26:27). Our futurist critics have seen this problem, and have relentlessly challenged us on it. To date, the Collective Body advocates have not done a satisfying job of answering it. However, it is not a problem at all for the Individual Body View advocates. We simply affirm, like Paul and the Pharisees, that at the Parousia the souls of the Old Testament dead saints would be **raised out of Hades and judged**.

June 58 – More than forty Jews plotted to kill Paul before they ate or drank. They never were able to carry out their plot, so there must have been some pretty hungry conspirators who would have been required to go to the temple and present a costly sacrifice to the priest for breaking their oath (see Lev. 5:4-13). The priests in the temple would have eaten well that day! The plot was overheard by Paul's nephew and he went to Paul in prison and told him about it. Paul had a sister living there in Jerusalem at that time (Summer AD 58), whose son found out about the plot to kill Paul and went to the prison to inform his uncle Paul about it (Acts 23:16-22). The Roman commander Lysias decided to get Paul out of Jerusalem and have him taken to Caesarea under cover of night. Then the Jewish leaders had to come down to Caesarea to present their case before Felix the Roman governor (who had a Jewish wife, Drusilla, the daughter of Agrippa I, and sister to Agrippa II and Bernice). The case was never decided by Felix, so Paul remained in prison there in Caesarea for two years (Acts 23:23-35; 24:27). Felix gave Paul some freedom in prison and allowed his friends to minister to him. (Acts 24:22-27) At his trial in Jerusalem, and in his multiple court appearances in Caesarea, Paul did not refrain from boldly declaring the gospel to the Roman and Jewish rulers. It was in Paul's hearing before Festus and Agrippa in Caesarea that he said there was "about to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the

wicked." He also mentioned the resurrection in his Jerusalem trial before the Sanhedrin.

In Martin Hengel's masterful work on *The Zealots*, he talks about this "conspiracy of forty men," and says that it "shows there were certain links between the ruling powers (Gk. dunatoi) in Jerusalem and the Sicarii. The relatively strong guard that accompanied Paul when he was taken to Caesarea can perhaps be regarded as an indication that the power of the Zealot movement lay behind this plot" (p. 351). This suggestion has a lot of merit. That very thought crossed my mind as I was reading Luke's account of it here in Acts 23:12-35. Josephus tells us that the Jewish leadership (chief priests and Sanhedrin) had a relationship to the Sicarii, who in turn were tightly connected with the Zealots. That appears to be the very kind of relationship in view here in Acts 23:12-22. A group of Jews conspired with the chief priests, elders, and the Sanhedrin. Luke does not identify this group of conspirators, but they are clearly following the pattern of the Sicarii that Josephus says so much about.

We might wonder why the Sicarii and Zealots were so opposed to Christianity in general, and to Apostle Paul especially? It had something to do with the Gentiles. The disturbance in Caesarea only one year before Paul was arrested and imprisoned in Caesarea, had further embittered the Zealots against the Gentiles, and pushed them closer to open rebellion against the Roman Gentile control of Judea. At the very time the Jews and Zealots were trying to rid themselves of Gentile influence and associations in Judea, the Christians (under the leadership of Paul especially) were bringing the Gentiles into the faith without circumcising them or coercing them to keep the Law. It therefore does not take much imagination to figure out why Paul was so unpopular in Judea and Galilee.

One of my podcast listeners asked about the Sadducee and Pharisee dispute on the resurrection issue which erupted in the middle of Paul's trial there in Jerusalem (Acts 23:6-10). He wondered how the Sadducees (who did not believe in a resurrection) felt about the resurrections that Jesus and the apostles performed (such as Lazarus, Dorcas, Eutychus, etc.). How could the Sadducees miss this overwhelming evidence for a resurrection and a conscious afterlife? And in regard to Acts 24:15, where Paul said there was "about to be" (Gk. MELLO) a resurrection of both the righteous and wicked, did the Pharisees believe the resurrection was imminent, like Paul did? If so, wouldn't that lend more credibility to the idea that the word MELLO really meant "about to happen" and not just "certain to happen." Those are excellent questions and observations. Let us try to shed some light on it.

Regarding the Sadducees, it is clear that they thought the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus was a mere magician's trick. However, they could not disprove it, so they instead tried to kill Lazarus. It is the old gangster strategy of killing all the witnesses before the trial, so there would be no witnesses to testify against them. It is also like the kings, if they didn't like the message that their messenger brought to them, they killed the messenger. However, that does not refute the resurrection. The truth stands regardless of their killing of the messengers.

The Sadducees not only rejected the idea that the dead were still conscious after death, but any kind of resurrection of the dead or a conscious afterlife. They did not believe in any kind of conscious life after death for anyone, and especially not a resurrection and eternal life afterwards. They believed in what we would label as "universal annihilation," meaning that everyone would permanently cease conscious existence at their death, even the righteous. However, the Pharisees believed in both a resurrection and a conscious afterlife for all.

In regard to Acts 24:15, in Paul's hearing before Felix in Caesarea (AD 58), it is not difficult to figure out who these Jews were that were making the accusations. They were associated with Ananias b. Nedebaeus, who we know was tightly connected with the Sanhedrin, most of whom were Sadducees. Even though this does not guarantee that Ananias was a Sadducee, it certainly points in that direction. Some of the High Priests were Pharisees, while others were not openly committed to either side. However, here in Acts 23 it seems apparent that Ananias was closely allied with the Sadducean element in the Sanhedrin, implying that he was probably Sadducean himself. The Pharisee party within the Sanhedrin was opposed to the Sadducee party (kind of like the Democrat and Republican parties here in the USA). It seems clear from the intensity of the controversy that arose at Paul's trial, that Ananias was on the Sadducean side of the dispute against Paul, while the Pharisees defended Paul's side of the debate about the resurrection.

This defense of Paul by the Pharisees raises an interesting point. It is highly doubtful that the Pharisees would have defended Paul if they had understood that he was teaching a radically different concept of resurrection than they were. Paul goes out of his way to identify with the Pharisees, necessarily implying that he agreed with them in their concept of "a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." If he had a radically different concept of that resurrection than the Pharisees (i.e., the

collective body idea), then he has to be charged with deliberate deceit in leading the Pharisees to think that he was advocating the same kind of resurrection that they were. There is a real problem here that the collective body advocates have not honestly faced, nor adequately dealt with. Either Paul agreed with the Pharisaic concept of a resurrection of the dead disembodied souls out of Sheol, or he deliberately deceived them into thinking that he did. Such deceit is unbecoming of an inspired Apostle who challenges us to follow him as He follows Christ. If he was deliberately deceptive on this occasion when he was supposedly preaching the gospel, how can we trust him anywhere else. Paul elsewhere claims that he NEVER preached the gospel in craftiness, or deceitful scheming (2 Cor. 4:2; Eph. 4:14). Such deceit would discredit not only Apostle Paul, but the whole gospel message. The clear implication here in Acts (24:15, 21, 25; 26:6-8, 22-23; 28:20) is that Paul was proclaiming in Christ a resurrection of dead souls (both righteous and wicked) out of the underworld (Sheol, Hades), just like the Pharisees believed in. The only difference between Paul's concept and the Pharisees is that Paul was teaching an "about to be" (Gk. MELLO) resurrection. However, there was not a complete difference on that issue. Some Pharisees in the first century believed the End of the Age was "about to" occur, which would be signaled by the resurrection of the dead out of Hades "on the Last Day." This really renders the collective body resurrection view "illegitimate, nugatory, and gossamer" in this text (to borrow a phrase from David Chilton).

In regard to the imminency (Gk. MELLO) of the resurrection, the Pharisees did not have a unified position. Some Pharisees may have thought the Resurrection was about to occur, while others would have viewed it as still far away. The timing of the resurrection was not a big deal to them. The major issue was whether there was going to be a resurrection at all. That is where the friction arose between the Sadducees and Pharisees, and Paul used that dispute to frustrate the intentions of Ananias and his Sadducean associates. The meaning of the Greek word MELLO is most easily and clearly understood by studying all 110 occurrences of the word in the New Testament. The question is not whether the Pharisees believed the Resurrection was near, but rather what did Paul mean when he said there was "about to be" (Gk. MELLO) a resurrection of the dead. We can easily determine what Paul meant, by looking at all the other places in his writings where he uses the word MELLO. Context is king in all word studies like this.

When we remember that Paul was "a Pharisee and a son of Pharisees" and that he had family living right there in Jerusalem (his sister and her son), it becomes easy to understand why Paul would have stirred up this debate, knowing that he had family and friends within the Pharisee party who might be willing to stand up in his defense. It is not surprising then to see Paul's nephew come to the prison and warn him of the plot by the Sadducees to kill him. Evidently Paul's sister and her son were Pharisaic sympathizers. The scene of the trial that is painted for us in Acts 23, along with the plot by 40 men afterwards to kill Paul, is extremely helpful in reconstructing the historical and cultural situation in Judea just eight years before the revolt. It is utterly amazing to see how God worked providentially using all the persecutions of the apostles to spread the gospel further and further into every nook and cranny of Jewish culture and the Gentile world.

Other Events While Paul Was Imprisoned in Caesarea (58-60)

AD 58 or 59 – Ishmael (son of Phabi) was appointed High Priest in place of Ananias b. Nedebaeus by Agrippa II. He ruled for two or three years (AD 58-61), depending on whether he began in AD 58 or AD 59. If the Theophilus addressed in both Luke and Acts was the former high priest by that name, it might help explain why Ananias was replaced by Ishmael not many months after Paul's trial under Ananias. Ishmael would then have been High Priest during the latter part of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea, as well as during Paul's voyage to, and arrival in Rome. VanderKam notes that Ishmael continued the policy of Ananias and other high priests who sent their collection agents to the threshing floors and winepresses to collect their tithes first before anyone else could get them. Josephus and the Talmud tell us that they used their "fists" to forcibly collect the lion's share of the tithes, leaving very little for the other priests [*Antiq.* 20.180-181 (20.8.8); *Antiq.* 20.206-207 (20.9.2); and *b. Pesah* 57a]. "A few lines later, the same [Talmudic] text says that "Ishmael was a disciple of Phineas" (b. Pesah 57a) [VanderKam, pp. 463-465]. Ishmael was involved in a dispute with Agrippa II and Festus, and was sent to Rome along with some others where he ended up being held hostage by Poppaea, the wife of Nero (VanderKam 465-466).

The dispute was over the higher wall that the people of Jerusalem built onto the back of the temple to prevent Agrippa II from eavesdropping on temple activities from his newly constructed lofty palace chamber. Agrippa's spying activities provoked the dispute, and the Jewish people reacted by building the wall higher to block his view. However, the higher wall also blocked the view of the Roman soldiers who were stationed on the western wall during festivals. Festus ordered the wall dismantled, but the Jewish leaders refused, and instead petitioned him for permission to send an entourage to Nero to get his decision. Festus granted their request, and they sent their top ten leaders (including Ishmael the High Priest and Helcias the Temple Treasurer). At Rome, they found Nero very receptive to their petition, since his wife Poppaea was sympathetic to the Jewish religion. The Jews in Rome had significant influence through Poppaea. She gained Nero's permission to keep the wall intact, but kept Ishmael and Helcias there as hostages. Thus, Ishmael was detained in Rome about the same time Apostle Paul arrived there (AD 61). When Agrippa II heard about this detention, he appointed a new High Priest (Joseph Kami b. Simon) in AD 61.

I suspect Paul was aware of this whole scenario with Ishmael, even though it is not mentioned in the book of Acts. Not long after this (AD 62), Josephus went to Rome to gain the release of some other priests who had been sent there earlier by Felix. Although Josephus says he was sent to release those other priests, it still seems possible that he may have attempted to gain the release of Ishmael and Helcias on that mission also. This raises a whole host of curiosities about the possible connections between his family and the families of the other high priests like Ishmael. Since Ishmael and Helcias had control of the temple treasury, they would have had enough funds at their disposal to bribe Nero for their release. If Josephus was sent to free them, he most likely did not go empty-handed to Nero. However, he was shipwrecked on his way, so any gold he might have taken with him was probably lost at sea, along with any documents that he brought with him.

AD 58-60 – Early date for Luke's Gospel? Based on the theory (discussed below) that the Theophilus to whom Luke wrote might have been the former High Priest, Theophilus b. Ananus, some interpreters have suggested that the two-year imprisonment of Paul in Caesarea might have been the occasion when Luke wrote his gospel (or a first edition of it, i.e., a "proto-Luke"). Some scholars who have worked on the Synoptic problem have suggested the existence of such a "proto-Luke" as coming before the finalized version of Luke that we now have. It might explain some of the anomalies in the Synoptic relationships that are otherwise difficult to understand. It is probably true that Luke did a lot of his research for his Gospel and Acts while he was in Palestine during that two years Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (AD 58-60), since he had easy access to the eyewitnesses like Peter and the other apostles in nearby Jerusalem (only 54 miles away). But it does not necessitate that his gospel was written or finished at that time. Under the date AD 61 below, we will discuss the more likely scenario that both Luke's gospel and his *Acts* were written (or at least finished) after Paul and Luke reached Rome in AD 61, while Paul was awaiting trial in Nero's court.

In Acts, Luke quotes **Festus** where he wanted to have something to write to Caesar before Paul was sent to Rome (Acts 25:26-27). This implies that it was customary in Roman courts to compose a legal document stating the charges against a prisoner before the prisoner was sent to the imperial court for trial. And this implies that Paul would have needed his own document to submit to the court in Rome for his defense against those charges. This makes it even more likely that Luke would not have waited to begin his research for Luke-Acts until they got to Rome, lest they get caught empty-handed and defenseless before the imperial tribunal. Paul would have needed to have something like Luke-Acts in hand before going into Nero's court. Paul would not have needed it as much in Judea where all these events were fairly familiar to **Agrippa** and **Festus**. So it is quite likely that Luke did most of his research for this while Paul was in Caesarea, and then wrote it or finished it after they got to Rome.

AD 58-60 – Who was "Most Excellent Theophilus"? While we are looking at Paul's arrest and trial in Judea in AD 58, this would be a great time to mention one of the theories about the identity of the *Theophilus* for whom Luke wrote.

Some interpreters have suggested that the Theophilus to whom Luke addressed his two books (Luke and Acts) was a former high priest of the family of **Ananus I**, so we will take a look at this theory and explain the reasoning behind it. If this was the **Theophilus** for whom Luke wrote, it would allow an early date (AD 58-60) for Luke and maybe some of the early chapters of Acts (1-21). However, it fails to account for the information in Acts 27-28 which could not have been written until after Paul reached

Rome in AD 61. Regardless of the date considerations here, the story about Theophilus, who was one of the former high priests, provides some helpful historical insight into the religio-politico-cultural situation in Judea at the time Paul was arrested.

An obvious question arises as to what kind of government official would need, request, or expect a full briefing on all the "facts in consecutive order" regarding Christianity and Paul's involvement with it. It is always possible that the former High Priest Theophilus might have used the unjust treatment of Apostle Paul by the rival High Priest Ananias as grounds for getting Ananias deposed. There is at least one article on the Internet defending the idea that Theophilus was the former High Priest. For example, see the following link:

http://www.sidroth.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=9761&news_iv_ctrl=0&abbr=art_

As far as we know, **Theophilus** was still alive and active in the leadership of Jerusalem at the time of Paul's arrest (AD 58). He might have known Paul personally back in the days before Paul became a Christian. Theophilus was about the same age as Paul, and could have grown up together with Paul in the streets of Jerusalem. He could have been a fellow student under Gamaliel, or known about his father (Ananus I) or brother-in-law (Caiaphas) giving Paul written authority to go to Damascus and arrest Christians. If Theophilus had studied with Paul under some of the same rabbis (such as the Pharisee Gamaliel), then he may have been somewhat sympathetic toward the Pharisee belief in a resurrection, and this may have prompted his interest in Paul's case, especially when Paul mentioned the resurrection issue at his trial where there were both Pharisees and Sadducees. It could be that Theophilus was a Pharisee and very interested in what the Christians were teaching about the resurrection. Or, it may have been pure political interest to use the mishandling of Paul's case by Ananias to get Ananias deposed.

Theophilus was from one of the most powerful and prestigious families in Judea (Ananus b. Seth). **Ananus' family** were rivals against the fellow who was High Priest at the time Paul was arrested, **Ananias b. Nedebaeus**. We also know that Apostle John was a friend of the **Ananus family** (John 18:15-16). John could have used that friendship connection to ask Theophilus to intervene on Paul's behalf against Ananias.

We noticed that there were two opposing parties within the Sanhedrin (the Sadducees versus the Pharisees, Acts 23:6-10). Apostle Paul used his affinity with the Pharisees to divide the assembly into two factions. Once this dissension occurred, it was impossible for the Sanhedrin to develop a strong consensus of condemnation against Paul. It is amazing how the Holy Spirit providentially worked in that situation to rescue Paul and put him into position to present the gospel to not only all the Jewish and Roman rulers in Palestine, but in Rome as well. That dissension prevented the Sadducees from having a majority consensus to condemn Paul.

The four gospels in our New Testament show this very same conflict going on constantly between the Sadducees and Pharisees during the ministry of Jesus. It would not be surprising to find out that this conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees may have been one of the factors involved in causing Paul and Luke to produce the two-volume work known as Luke and Acts, which were addressed to someone known as, "Most Excellent Theophilus". There are several theories about who he was. We will look at some of them here, as well as later under the date of AD 61.

Besides the reference to Theophilus in Luke 1:3, the noble title of "Most Excellent" (similar to: Your Excellency, Your Honor, mighty, strong) is ascribed to two other persons in our New Testament [all by Luke]: (1) "**most excellent** governor **Felix**" in Acts 23:26 and 24:3, and (2) " **most excellent Festus**" in Acts 26:25. Two similar uses are found in the writings of Josephus: (1) "O Epaphroditus, thou **most excellent** of men do I dedicate all this" (Life 430), and (2) " **most excellent** Epaphroditus" (Apion 1:1). Whiston's note on Epaphroditus says: "...he can hardly be that Epaphroditus who was formerly secretary to Nero, and was slain on the fourteenth [or fifteenth] of Domitian, after he had been for a good while in banishment; but another Epaphroditus, a freedman, and procurator of Trajan, as says Grotius on Luke 1:3." Government officials were addressed in this way, and it could easily be either a Jewish or Roman official, such as a High Priest, or former High Priest like Theophilus.

There were several rival high priestly families throughout the first century. The **Boethus** family was one of them, along with the **Ananus** and **Ananias** families. These three families accounted for at least 15 of the 25 high priests that ruled from the birth of Christ (5 BC) to the outbreak of the revolt (AD 66). Several of the others who were not from one of these families, were still tightly connected with one or

more of these families. It is interesting that the Pharisees were occasionally able to get some of their associates into power, but most of the time the High Priesthood was controlled by the more wealthy and powerful Sadducees. If you would like to do some study on all the High Priests of the first century, there is no better book than the one by James C. VanderKam entitled, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Fortress Press, 2004). There is also an excellent list of these high priests in the back of F. F. Bruce's book, *Israel and Nations*. The book by Bruce is available at our website store (http://preterist.org/store).

For our study here, we have reproduced part of that list of High Priests from Pentecost to AD 70, in order to point out some of the rival family power struggles that were going on in the background at this time. Colored text has been added to indicate the family connections:

18-36 Joseph Caiaphas (son-in-law of **Ananus I**)
36-37 Jonathan (son of **Ananus I**)
37-41 **Theophilus** (son of **Ananus I**)
41-42 Simon Cantheras (son of **Boethus**) - Simon the Just?
42-43 Matthias (son of **Ananus I**)
43-44 Elioenai (son of **Cantheras**)
44-47 Joseph (son of Kami)
47-58 **Ananias** (son of Nedebaeus)
58-60 Ishmael (son of Phabi)
60-62 Joseph Kabi (son of Simon)
62 Ananus II (son of **Ananus I**
62-63 Jesus (son of Damnaeus)
63-65 Jesus (son of Gamaliel)
65-68 Matthias (son of **Theophilus**, son of **Ananus I**)
68-70 Phineas (son of Samuel)

Notice all the light blue highlights (the **Ananus** family). There are two references to Theophilus here (in AD 37 and AD 65). **Theophilus** ruled for about four years, while his son Matthias served for about three years. I want to focus our attention on two of these family rivalries (i.e., **Ananus** versus **Ananias**), especially upon **Theophilus** who was from the family of **Ananus**.

When Paul mentioned the resurrection issue at his trial (Acts 23), the Pharisees immediately rallied to his defense. The Pharisees were looking for ways to discredit and remove Ananias and his Sadducean party from their controlling position. The Pharisees were not in agreement with Christianity generally, but they did agree with the resurrection idea, and were more than willing to use the unfair treatment of Paul by Ananias and the Sadducees in order to strengthen their own Pharisaic power base. They saw the extremely wealthy and powerful Sadducees as being more of a threat to them than the poor persecuted sect of Christians, so they would have had no hesitation in using the ill-treatment of Christians by the Sadducees as an excuse to challenge the Sadducees.

However, I do not believe the Sadducee versus Pharisee conflict at Paul's trial in Jerusalem was the only factor involved in the rivalry between the various ruling families, nor even the primary factor. There is more going on here than just a Sadducee-Pharisee dispute about the resurrection. Party politics and power struggles were also involved, and it was more likely this factor which would have moved Theophilus to get involved in Paul's defense against the ruling high priest at that time (Ananias). There is no significant evidence that Theophilus was a Pharisee, but rather that he was more likely a Sadducee. So if he was in the same party as Ananias, why would he work against Ananias by helping Paul? I think we already know the answer to that.

Each family was more concerned about their own power than they were about their particular political party. The chief priests were all rivals, regardless of their party affiliation, and were constantly on the watch for any opportunity to knock down their rivals and put themselves in the top position of power. It was all about power and control of the Temple and its vast treasury of gold and silver. But God used the Sadducee-Pharisee conflict at Paul's trial, as well as the rival factions for the High Priesthood, to expose the gospel to the top Jewish and Roman government officials.

Theophilus saw how the dispute with the Pharisees weakened Ananias' power in the Sanhedrin. Here was an opportunity for the Ananus family (represented by Theophilus) to diminish the power of Ananias and augment their own power at the same time. His rivalry against Ananias would be more

than enough to explain why he would have sided with Paul (for convenience sake, like the old saying, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend") and used Paul's case to help unseat his rival Ananias, and replace him with someone friendly to the Ananus family.

Something like this could be involved here in Acts 23, and we can see additional evidence pointing in that direction when we notice that **Ananias** was, in fact, removed from the High Priesthood not long after the trial of Paul. The new High Priest who replaced **Ananias** was **Ishmael b. Phiabi**, who ruled for about two or three years (AD 59-61). Neither he, nor his successor, **Joseph b. Simon** (AD 61-62), seem to have been related to either of the two main rival families of **Ananias** and **Ananus**, although Joseph may have been related to the **Boethus family**. However, in AD 62, while Paul was in Rome awaiting trial, **Ananus II** (brother of **Theophilus**) came to power as High Priest in Jerusalem. He immediately arrested James and some of his companions, and had James killed. For this presumptuous and illegal action, he was deposed from office after only three months in the High Priesthood. But that was not the end of the story for the Ananus family.

Two more high priests that were not related to the Ananus family served for about a year each (Jesus b. Damnaeus, and Jesus b. Gamaliel), and then **Matthias**, the son of **Theophilus** came to power. He was the last of the **Ananus dynasty**. He was appointed in AD 64, probably just before the feast of Passover, and remained in office at the time of the revolt in AD 66. This last descendant of the **Ananus family** was the **son of Theophilus**, and the **grandson of Ananus I**. The fact that **Theophilus** was able to get his brother and son into the office not long after **Ananias**, and in spite of the fact that **Ananias** still wielded a huge amount of power in Jerusalem, tells us a lot about the incredible level of power struggle that was going on throughout this period. All of this certainly allows for the possibility that Luke was writing to one of the rival leaders in Jerusalem at that time when **Ananias** was at the pinnacle of his power. The most rival family at that time would certainly have been the **Ananus family**, and the most likely representatives of that family at that time would have been **Theophilus** and **Ananus II**, both of whom were sons of Ananus I (who was the High Priest three decades earlier when Jesus was crucified).

Two decades before Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, Theophilus had been high priest for about four years (AD 37-41). Three more members of the **Ananus family** served as High Priests after Theophilus: (1) **Matthias** b. Ananus (AD 42-43), (2) **Ananus** b. Ananus (AD 62), and (3) **Matthias** b. Theophilus b. Ananus (AD 65-68). Notice that last one. He was the son of Theophilus and grandson of Ananus. This shows that the **Ananus family** continued to be serious contenders for the High Priesthood right up to the very end, especially at the very time that **Ananias b. Nedebaeus** was in the height of his power (AD 47-58). Right down to the very end (AD 66), we see these two families constantly challenging each other, trying to regain or maintain their power over their rivals.

Furthermore, Josephus confirms that this very kind of power struggle between rival High Priests, and their oppression of the common people, intensified at this very time (AD 58-66) [*Antiq.* 20.180-181 (20.8.8)]. And it is not without significance that **Ananias'** term as High Priest ended not many months after his unfair trial and mistreatment of Apostle Paul. When the new High Priest (Ishmael b. Phiabi) came to power, the rivalry really heated up. Evidently the **Ananias** party was bitter about being disenfranchised, and reacted violently against their successors. According to Josephus, there was open hostility in the streets of Jerusalem, with youngsters of both parties throwing rocks at each other. So, it is no stretch of credulity to suggest that Theophilus might have been using Paul's case as a tool to unseat Ananias and his associates, nor is it any surprise to see two more of the Ananus family become High Priests soon after this (**Ananus** b. Ananus and **Matthias** b. Theophilus). It appears that the Ananus dynasty was somewhat successful in reducing the power of Ananias and strengthening the power of their own family, perhaps by using the unfair treatment of Apostle Paul by the High Priest Ananias. So this idea about Theophilus being the former high priest does have some historical plausibility. It is not totally far-fetched.

A good exercise to test this theory would be to read back through the two-volume work of Luke-Acts to see if the narrative actually fits this scenario. Did Luke write in such a way as to help the cause of Theophilus against his rival High Priest? And, did the Holy Spirit (writing through Luke and Paul) use this rivalry as an opportunity to get the gospel into the hands of all the Jewish leaders? It seems clear that God was always providentially using this rivalry to accomplish his own predetermined plan to spread the gospel throughout every level of society in the Roman and Jewish worlds of that day, and get the written gospel of Luke into the hands and eyesight of those who would probably never have read the New Testament documents otherwise? Was the **Ananus family** so desperate to maintain

their power, that they would even help a lowly Christian if it would somehow feather their own nest? Did God use their greed and lust for power against them? Those are interesting questions to ponder.

Regardless, I tend to reject this Jewish High Priest theory for the identity of Theophilus, and instead opt for a **court official in Nero's court at Rome** who was charged with gathering the facts on Paul's case. If the Theophilus for whom Luke wrote was the former high priest, it would imply an earlier date for Luke's gospel and the first ten chapters of Acts while Paul was in prison in Caesarea (AD 58-60). Unfortunately, that early date fails to account for the information in Acts 27-28 which could not have been written until after Paul reached Rome in AD 61. Since those chapters could not have been written before AD 61, it would seem likely that the rest of the book of Acts was written in Rome also, especially in view of **Acts 11:24** which **eulogizes Barnabas after his death**, implying that Acts was not written (rewritten or finished) until after his death in AD 60. Nevertheless, this story about the former high priest Theophilus provides some helpful historical insight into the religio-politico-cultural situation in Judea at the time Paul was arrested. That kind of background information is always helpful to know, regardless of whether it applies in this particular situation or not. We will develop the other theory about Theophilus being a **Roman court official** below under the subtitle of **"Luke-Acts Written in Rome" at the date of AD 61-62**. See that discussion for more information on the date of Luke-Acts and the **identity of Theophilus**.

AD 60 – Earthquake in Laodicea and the Lycus valley, which affected all seven cities mentioned in Revelation. It is mentioned in Tacitus *Annals* 14:27 (5:151), from which most scholars derive the date of AD 60. However, both Eusebius (*Chronicle* 64) and Orosius say that it happened after the Great Fire in Rome (i.e., after AD 64). But since Tacitus is the first century historian here, he most likely has the correct date (AD 60). Laodicea was so wealthy that they rebuilt their city immediately without any help from the Roman government. But the other cities (such as nearby Colossae, etc.) would have gladly taken the relief funds from Nero to rebuild. The Laodiceans were very proud of their wealth, the very thing for which the book of Revelation rebukes them (Rev. 3:17). The earthquake occurred in AD 60. Revelation's mention of them was written in late AD 62 or very early 63 (after they had evidently recovered from that earthquake). Some of the late-daters of Revelation use this to suggest that Laodicea (and the other cities) could not have rebuilt this soon, but other Roman cities had recovered this quickly from similar disasters, and Laodicea was wealthy enough to do it. So this is not a problem for the early date. Ken Gentry deals well with this issue in his excellent book, *Before Jerusalem Fell* (pp. 318-322).

Paul's Appeal to Caesar and Voyage to Rome (AD 60-61)

May 60 – Felix was removed from the procuratorship by Nero and recalled to Rome to answer for his mishandling of the Jewish-Gentile riots in Caesarea (AD 57). Because his brother Pallas in Rome still had influence with Nero, he was able to keep Felix from suffering any greater penalty than the loss of his procuratorship. As a favor to the Jews whom he had offended, he left Paul in prison in Caesarea. Even though Antonius Felix and his brother Pallas were not well-born (as slaves), they were able to gain their freedom and become influential in Nero's court. Felix had three different wives from royal families, one of whom was a granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra, and his third wife was Drusilla the daughter of Agrippa I, and sister to both Agrippa II and Bernice. Felix and Drusilla had a son named Agrippa who was killed in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

May 60 – Porcius Festus became the new Procurator (ruled 60-62).

May 60 – Paul's trial in Caesarea and Appeal to Caesar. After Festus arrived in Caesarea, three days later he went to Jerusalem to meet the Jewish leadership there. They immediately requested that Paul be brought to Jerusalem for trial (planning to ambush him and kill him before he ever got to Jerusalem). But Festus knew that Roman law required Roman citizens (like Paul) to be tried before the Roman tribunal in Caesarea. So he told the Jews to come to Caesarea for the trial. The Jews came to Caesarea and "brought many and serious charges against Paul which they could not prove." (Acts 25:7) Paul showed that those accusations were false. But Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor, to stay in good graces with them, so he asked Paul if he was willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried

there. But Paul refused to go to Jerusalem, knowing that there was a plot to kill him, so he **appealed to Caesar** for a decision in his case (Acts 25:11), knowing that this would get him out of Judea and away from that very threatening situation there. It would also give him the opportunity to present the gospel to Nero and his court in Rome. No money could buy an opportunity like that, yet God providentially arranged it, and all at the expense of Rome! After conferring with his legal counselors, Festus decided to send Paul to Rome as he requested. Not many days after this, while Paul was still waiting to be sent to Rome, **Agrippa II** and **Bernice** came to Caesarea to visit Festus.

June 60 – Paul was brought before Agrippa II and Festus. Festus mentioned the case of Paul to Agrippa, and Agrippa said he would like to hear what Paul had to say. So Festus had Paul brought to the auditorium while Agrippa and Bernice were present. Festus explained the situation with Paul and said that he had nothing definite to write to Nero about Paul, and that he needed their help to find out what Paul was actually accused of, so that he would have **something to write to Nero**. Paul was then brought before Festus and Agrippa II for an examination of his case. Since Agrippa II was involved in the internal affairs of the Jews in Jerusalem, Festus hoped that Agrippa would be able to help him decide what to write to Nero. After hearing Paul's defense, Festus and Agrippa went aside to confer with each other. They agreed that Paul had done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment. Agrippa said that Paul might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. But he had appealed, so **to Rome he must go**. (Acts 25-26)

Oct 60 – Paul began his voyage to Rome (Oct AD 60 to April AD 61 – It took five or six months because of the storms and shipwreck) Acts 27-28. We are not told in Acts just how long it was after his trial that he was sent to Rome, but evidently it was Autumn before they left, after the Yom Kippur **fast** (Acts 27:9). The storms were already beginning to form on the Mediterranean by the time they had set sail for the coast of Asia Minor. This means it must have been mid-to-late Autumn by the time they left Caesarea.

A centurion named **Julius** of the Augustan cohort was the soldier in charge of Paul and the other prisoners who were being taken to Rome. Paul was accompanied on the trip by **Luke** and **Aristarchus** (a Macedonian Christian from Thessalonica – Acts 27:2). They left Caesarea on an **Adramyttian** ship headed for the coast of Asia Minor. When they landed at Myra (in Lycia on the southern coast of Turkey), they changed ships. The centurion found an **Alexandrian** grain ship that was headed to Italy (Acts 27:6, and 27:38). It must have been a huge ship, since it had 276 persons on board along with its cargo (Acts 27:37).

From that point onwards it was slow going, getting worse by the day. By the time they reached the southern coast of **Crete**, it was becoming extremely difficult to make any further progress, because the winds were contrary. Then the "**Euroquilo**" storm broke upon them. The storm pushed them out into the **Adriatic Sea** where they were cast about by the storm for three weeks or more. Finally they sensed that they were approaching an island, and took soundings. Indeed the water was getting very shallow (only 90 feet). They cast four anchors from the stern and waited for daybreak. When day came, they saw a bay with a beach, and tried to maneuver the ship onto the beach. But the ship struck a reef where two seas meet and was hopelessly stuck there. The waves began to break up the ship. It was time to abandon ship. All 276 persons on board made it safely to land (island of Malta).

Late 60 – Barnabas was killed by the Jews on Cyprus. The *Epistle of Barnabas* was very critical of the Jews, and probably provoked the Jews to hunt him down and kill him. Some of the traditions about Barnabas harmonize well with the biblical data, giving us a reasonably good date for the death of Barnabas in AD 60-61, just before John Mark showed up in Rome to work with Apostle Paul (AD 61-62). Two of those traditions about Barnabas date his death no later than AD 61. It would make a lot of sense to date his death here in AD 60, since both traditions state that Barnabas instructed Mark to go to Paul and work with him after Barnabas was killed, and we do not see Mark back in the company of Paul until after Paul reached Rome (AD 61). See the Masters Thesis of Ed Stevens which deals with all this in greater detail (*Redating the Epistle of Barnabas*). We also say more about this below where we discuss the writing of the epistle to the *Hebrews* in AD 62-63.

Nov or Dec 60 – Paul's Shipwreck on Malta. The account of Paul's voyage and shipwreck on Malta, found in Acts 27-28, is one of the most fascinating stories in the book of Acts, or even in the whole Bible. Every incident on the trip was surrounded by the providential oversight of the Lord Jesus and

His angels. After surviving all the dangers of the sea, as soon as they got to land and built a fire, a poisonous snake bit Paul on the hand (Acts 28:5)! Everyone around him thought he was going to die. But God worked a miracle. The snake venom was miraculously neutralized by God, and Paul suffered no ill effects of it whatsoever.

This appears to be an example of the very kind of miracles that Jesus predicted ("pick up serpents" see Mark 16:18). And when the people saw that miracle, it gave Paul the opportunity to heal their sick and preach the gospel to them (Acts 28:4-10). As a result, the whole island of Malta was converted to Christ, and remains 98% Christian to this day. Isn't it amazing how God can take the bad things that happen in our lives, and use them to accomplish good for His Kingdom! There is no way to know how many thousands of souls were impacted with the gospel as a result of that voyage to Rome and the shipwreck on Malta.

Its connection with the story of Jonah in the Old Testament is also interesting. Jonah was a prophet of Israel commanded to go to Nineveh and preach to the Gentiles, warning them to repent. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah took a ship bound for Tarshish (called Tarsus in Paul's day). The ship got caught in a storm and almost sank, before Jonah told them to throw him into the sea. Jonah was swallowed by a fish and spit up on the land three days later. The storm stopped immediately after he was thrown overboard, and the sailors offered sacrifices to Yahweh because of the storm ceasing. From the account in Jonah, it seems that some of those Tarshish sailors became worshippers of Yahweh, since it says not only that they offered sacrifices to Yahweh, but also "made vows" of some kind (perhaps to be circumcised once they safely reached land).

Were these the first converts to Judaism from the city of Tarshish? Could this have been the time when the Jewish community in Tarshish began, where some Benjaminite families from Israel later came to live (i.e., the family of Saul of Tarsus)? Apostle Paul was born in Tarsus, a Roman city. He was sent to preach to the Gentiles just like Jonah was. The ship he was on was driven by a similar storm and shipwrecked on the island of Malta, south of Italy and Sicily. As a result of Paul's activities on that island while Wintering there, the whole island became Christian (just like the whole Gentile city of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah). Even to this day, 98% of the population on the island of Malta are Roman Catholics, with memorials to St. Paul all over the island.

Late 60 or Early 61 – The Gospel of John was probably written about the time Paul left Judea on his voyage to Rome. See more about this in the section below dealing with John and all of his writings.

Early 61 – Epistle of 1 John Written about this time. Since letters like this were sent by couriers who quite often carried other books and letters with them, it is likely that this epistle was written after the Gospel of John was finished, and was sent by the same courier that carried John's gospel in early 61. See more about this in the section below dealing with John and all of his writings.

Mar 61 – Paul finally arrived in Rome – After Wintering on the island of Malta for three months, the centurion put all the prisoners on another **Alexandrian ship** (the Twin Brothers) that had Wintered on Malta. They took a short hop to **Syracuse** (on southeast corner of Sicily), then onward to **Rhegium** on the southern tip of Italy. Then they traveled up the western coast of Italy to **Puteoli** (just south of Rome). Evidently they disembarked there and traveled the rest of the short distance to Rome by land. They found some Christian brethren in Puteoli, with whom they stayed for seven days. Then they went toward Rome, where Christians came as far as the **Market of Appius** and **Three Inns** to meet Paul.

Paul's House Arrest in Rome (AD 61-63)

Apr 61 – Paul arrived in Rome and began preparing for his trial before Nero (Acts 28:30-31). He was allowed to stay in his own rented quarters with a soldier guarding him. That soldier was a **captive audience**! I wonder how many gospel sermons that soldier got to hear during those two years! It must have had impact, since Paul says later in his prison epistle to the Philippians (1:13) that "the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole **praetorian guard** and to everyone else."

Three days after arriving in Rome, Paul arranged a meeting with "the leading men of the Jews" who said they had not received any letters from Judea, nor heard any reports about him from anyone who had come from Judea. They were very willing to hear his side of the story. So they set a date, and came to him in large numbers to hear him "solemnly testify about the Kingdom of God from morning to

evening" (Acts 28:23). Some believed, but most did not. Paul stayed there in his own rented quarters for two years, welcoming all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom with all openness and unhindered (Acts 28:31).

This story about Paul's encounter with the Jewish leadership in Rome is interesting for several reasons. They said that they had not received any letters from Judea, nor had anyone come from Judea to tell them about Paul. What does that imply? Could it be that the emissaries and couriers that were sent from Judea got caught in the same storm that shipwrecked Paul, and were lost at sea? That is certainly possible. And if the Judean officials sent any letters by ship, those letters were also lost at sea, or otherwise intercepted and never made it to their destination. Very providential.

This becomes all the more interesting when we find out that Josephus went to Rome two years after Paul did, and arrived just about the time Paul's case was finally going to trial before Nero. We will say more about that below at the date of Nov 62.

We have to wonder what happened to all the mail and other documents that the passengers had on the boat with them? Were they destroyed by the sea water and lost at sea when the ship sank? Probably. And that includes any documents that the Jews in Jerusalem may have sent to the Jews in Rome to request them to use their influence with Nero to get Paul condemned.

If Luke and Paul had any documents with them, they would have suffered the same fate, unless they were sealed in wax and placed in something that would serve as a flotation device. They most likely made copies of any important documents in Judea before they left, and then had those copies sent to them by land courier to Rome. Maybe the Roman church already had copies of them, sent to them by some of the other churches in Macedonia or Achaia that had copies. We do not know. But it was customary to make copies of important documents before leaving on a trip by boat. And the church in Jerusalem would have wanted copies of Paul's books anyway, regardless of his travel to Rome. Did Paul and Luke send copies by land to Rome before they left, or did they request them from their Winter quarters on Malta to be sent to Rome so that they would be there waiting when they arrived in Rome in the Spring? Any of these scenarios are possible.

If you are interested in the probable location of Paul's shipwreck on the island of Malta, you will want to go to the CBN news website. They did a special story on it. The name of the archaeologist who did the work on this project was Robert Cornuke (former Los Angeles crime scene investigator). The story can be found on the CBN news website at the following URL (viewed on 6/2/2012): http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2010/February/Searching-for-Pauls-Shipwreck-on-Malta/

Before the voyage to Rome, Luke would have had plenty of time to go back and forth from Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders there, and gather all the information he needed to write his two books. The delay would also have given Paul plenty of time to start preparing his defense for the trial in Rome. When they reached Rome, Luke and Paul began writing the two volume work now known as Luke and Acts. which must have been finished within the first year after reaching Rome.

AD 61-63 – Paul's first Roman imprisonment continued for "two full years" according to Luke (Acts 28:30). Paul's prison epistles were written during this time (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Hebrews). There is no filler in the Bible. Every detail is there for a reason. A good example is the story about Paul's arrival in Rome, where it says that the Jews in Rome had neither received letters from Judea concerning Paul, nor had any of the brethren from Judea come to Rome and said anything bad about Paul (Acts 28:21). That is peculiar. It was customary for such accusations to be sent to Rome, and to have Judean visitors come to Rome and tell about what was happening in Judea. So we have to wonder how it happened that the charges against Paul never arrived, and no one ever showed up to say anything bad about him. One good possibility is that the accusations were in the mail carried on the same ship with Paul that was shipwrecked, or on some other ship that was likewise wrecked. Perhaps the documents were lost at sea when the ship sank. However it happened, it was certainly a stroke of providence at the very least. The failure of those documents to reach Rome may have prompted the Jewish leadership in Judea to send a courier (emissary) along with the documents (both by land and sea) to make sure they arrived safely. A good example of this kind of thing might be the trip that Josephus took to Rome in the Fall of 62. His main mission was to free some priests who were being held hostage in Rome, but that was probably not his only reason for being there, especially since he stayed there for almost four years (Fall of 62 to Summer of 66), and was still there when Paul was arrested the second time and brought to Rome for execution.

AD 61 – Mark joined Paul and Luke in Rome. Two separate traditions about Barnabas and Mark state that Barnabas instructed Mark to go to Paul and work with him after Barnabas was killed (AD 60), and we do not see Mark back in the company of Paul until after Paul reached Rome (AD 61). Mark must have brought with him copies of his own gospel and Matthew's, which Luke would have used as resources to write his own gospel (*Luke*) and the book of *Acts*, which were evidently finished before Paul's case went to trial (late 62). This would imply that Mark reached Rome soon after Paul did. This is discussed more below under the production of the book of *Hebrews* by Paul in AD 62-63. The forthcoming Masters Thesis of Ed Stevens (*Redating the Epistle of Barnabas*) deals with this also.

About the General Epistles (Encyclicals) (AD 61-64)

Have you ever wondered why the general epistles (*Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, and Jude*) were called the Catholic Epistles, and why this kind of epistle was not written earlier, and sent out as a general encyclical to all the churches? There are lots of reasons for this, but here are some of the more obvious ones:

1. When Paul was arrested and imprisoned, he was no longer able to visit all those churches that he had established throughout Greece, Macedonia, and Turkey. Neither Paul nor Peter wanted those churches to be left without guidance and oversight. That is why James, Peter, John, and Jude went into overdrive with their literary activity, trying to stabilize those churches that were being overwhelmed by false teachers who were taking advantage of Paul's absence.
2. Those churches were also beginning to feel the heat of the persecution, and there was a strong temptation to fall away from the faith and go back into Judaism or paganism. So, the apostles in Jerusalem accelerated their writing activity to undergird those struggling persecuted churches.
3. A decade earlier there weren't very many churches outside of Palestine and Syria. But Paul's second and third missionary journeys had established a lot of new churches in Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. So, when Paul was arrested and imprisoned, there were a lot more churches out there in the Diaspora that needed help.
4. Paul was scrambling to prepare his defense before Nero. His contact with his network of churches was probably limited for security purposes. Until he knew how his trial was going to turn out, he dared not write very many letters to his churches which would put him and them both in danger. So, the other apostles picked up the slack, and started sending letters to all of Paul's churches, as well as to all the other new churches outside Palestine that had recently been established, and were struggling in the persecution (Egypt, N. Africa, Ethiopia, Syria, Cyprus, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Armenia, Turkey, etc.).
5. That is why these letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude are called "general epistles" or "catholic epistles," because they were not addressed to only one church, but rather to all the churches. The word encyclical was used to describe them because the couriers made the rounds (the circuit) to all the churches with those letters. The couriers would go to one city, read the letter, make a copy of it for that church, and then go to the next church down the road to do the same thing there, over and over again, until they made the rounds of all the churches.
6. Below we will look at the general epistles of *James* and *John* (1,2,3), as well as the two epistles of *Peter*, and the one by *Jude*. Since I believe Hebrews was written by Paul while he was in Rome awaiting trial, we will deal with it also.

AD 61-62 – <u>Epistle of James</u> (Lord's brother) was evidently written not long before he was killed by Ananus II at Passover in AD 62 [see *Antiq* 20:197-203 (20.9.1)]. Since James wrote to the Diaspora "twelve tribes," the implication is that he was inside Palestine and in Jerusalem at the time of writing. This epistle seems to have been written to Jewish Christians in churches (or "synagogues" Jas 2:2) outside Palestine, probably including all the churches that Paul and Barnabas and the other apostles had established in Egypt, N. Africa, Ethiopia, Syria, Cyprus, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Armenia, Turkey, etc.. It also seems, from the internal evidence, that this book was written about the time Paul was in prison in Rome, probably to help stabilize some of the churches that Paul had established, during the time Paul was unable to visit them while he was in Rome under house-arrest awaiting trial before Nero.

It seems that the Jewish Christians outside Palestine were still having difficulty sorting out the Law continuity issues, so James, Peter, Paul and John wrote general epistles to them. Some may have been questioning Paul's approach, while others may have been questioning James' approach. In reality, both James and Paul were preaching the same gospel, even though Martin Luther and others had difficulty understanding their statements about justification by faith versus works of the Law. There really is no conflict between them.

Paul in Romans shows clearly that true saving faith required repentance, dying to sin, and pursuit of righteousness and sanctification. He clearly forbade the Roman saints to "continue in sin" after they had supposedly "died to it" (Romans 6). True saving faith, for both Paul and James, included a change in lifestyle and a pursuit of righteousness and sanctification. Paul simply says that it is not good works that save us. We are not saved **BY** good works, but rather saved **TO DO** good works. Both Paul and James agree that without faith in Jesus, no amount of good works could save. Faith had to come first. And that faith and repentance causes us to die to the old sinful lifestyle and pursue after works of righteousness, *not in order to be saved, but rather because we have been saved*.

James is dealing with faith and works from a post-conversion perspective. Evidently some worldly Christians (libertines or Gnostics) were basing their decadent lifestyle on a misunderstanding or distortion of Paul, and were claiming that faith was all they needed to get them into heaven, and that outward expressions of righteousness and sanctification were irrelevant and unnecessary. James sets the record straight on that. So did Paul in his epistle to the Romans. How can anyone claim to be a Christian if their life shows no evidence of repentance and righteousness? Even the demons believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be, but they do not serve or obey Christ. How can anyone who claims to believe in Christ expect to go to heaven if they have no corresponding works of righteousness? Their hope is empty. The saving kind of faith which both Paul and James describe, is a faith that does not "continue in sin," but instead pursues after righteousness and sanctification ("without which no one will see the Lord" Heb 12:14).

Apostle John and His Writings (AD 60-62)

Apostle John produced an account of the gospel, plus three general epistles, and the book of Revelation. These five books of John have traditionally been some of the most challenging of all the New Testament writings to which to assign dates. Futurists rely almost totally on late second century tradition (Irenaeus and Eusebius) for their information about the time of writing. If that was the only information we had available to us, then it perhaps might be reasonable to put some weight on it. However, none of the external traditions about John have any reliable first-century eyewitness support, except for Papias possibly, but he does not support the late date. The rest of the tradition comes from late second century and afterwards. Therefore, the only reliable evidence we have for John and his books comes from our New Testament writings. It is this internal historical and contextual evidence which trumps all of the later external tradition, and gives us more than enough information to pinpoint the dates for John's five books within a very tight range (AD 60-62).

Biblical facts about Apostle John after Pentecost: (internal biblical evidence)

- Throughout the first four chapters of Acts we find John still in Jerusalem and closely associated with Peter.
- In Acts 8, when the gospel spread to the Samaritans, the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John down to Samaria
- According to Gal. 2:9, John was still there in Jerusalem, associated with Peter and James, at the time of the Jerusalem Council in AD 49.
- The next thing we hear about John is that he was exiled (from Palestine evidently) and sent to the island of Patmos off the coast of Turkey. This implies that John stayed in Jerusalem all the way from Pentecost to his exile in AD 62. He would probably have been in his early 50's by the time he was exiled.
- Matt 20 and Mark 10 - Jesus' prediction that James and John would both drink the same cup of martyrdom that Jesus drank, implying that both of them would die before the Second Coming.
- John 5:2 – Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. Note that John says "there is in Jerusalem" (present tense) at the time he

was writing this gospel. That pool was demolished and filled in with rubble at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This means that the gospel of John had to be written before AD 70. It also supports the idea that John was living right there in Jerusalem at the time of writing.

- John 21:23 – a rumor circulated about John that he would not die (meaning that he would remain alive until the Parousia, at which time his body would be changed from mortal to immortal without experiencing physical death, and then be caught up to be with Christ). However, John disputed that rumor and said that Jesus gave him no guarantee that he would live and remain until the Parousia. Jesus only told Peter that it was none of Peter's business what was going to happen to John. The reason John disputed it, is probably because he remembered the prophecy of Jesus about both he and his brother James drinking the cup of martyrdom, which his brother James had already suffered in AD 44 (Acts 12:1-2). He at least suspected, if not firmly believed, that he would suffer martyrdom before the Parousia, just like his brother did.

Traditions about John: (external evidence)

- There are some traditions coming from the late second century about what John supposedly did, experienced, and suffered in Ephesus after he was released from Patmos in the mid-90's. They appear to be somewhat far-fetched, since it would mean that John was in his mid-80's by the time he wrote the book of Revelation in AD 96, and approaching ninety years old by the time he was released to dwell in Ephesus. Those stories about him on foot chasing down a wayward disciple, are hard enough to believe about a fifty-year-old man in AD 63. It is far more difficult to believe he did those things at the ripe old age of 80 or 90.
- According to one story, when John entered the bath house on one occasion, he found Cerinthus the heretic inside, and immediately fled the scene (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.,* iii.3, 4): *"There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us flee, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within."*
- The tradition about him not being harmed by being boiled alive in hot oil, is somewhat more credible, since it is the kind of miracle that the longer ending of Mark 16 mentions. Here is what Tertullian said about it: "The Apostle **John** was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling **oil**, and thence remitted to his island-exile" [Tertullian. *The Prescription Against Heretics*, Chapter 36]. This could have happened in Judea before his exile, possibly at the time of his arrest with James. The Jews may have tried to kill him there by these means, and when that failed, they sent him to Patmos.
- If you would like to read a summary of all those traditions, Philip Schaff has them listed in volume one of his eight-volume work entitled, *History of the Christian Church*. All of those later traditions about John may have a germ of truth in them, but their date of occurrence has been mishandled by the late second century writers. This becomes much more evident when we look at the earlier traditions which futurists have ignored, glossed over, or tried to sweep under the carpet.

The Earliest and Best Tradition about John: (external evidence)

- The earliest tradition we have, and perhaps the more reliable, comes from **Papias** (AD 130), an early second century Christian writer, who wrote about 50 years before Irenaeus (AD 180). Futurists tend to ignore the testimony of Papias about the martyrdom of John, since it does not support their late date theories for the book of Revelation.
- Papias says that John was killed by the Jews, just like his brother James was.
- Furthermore, Papias backed up his claim by pointing straight at the Biblical statements of Jesus in Matthew 20 and Mark 10.

Matt 20:22-23 --
"drink THE CUP THAT I AM ABOUT TO DRINK"
"**MY CUP** you [both] shall drink"

Mark 10:38-39 --
"drink THE CUP THAT I DRINK"
"be baptized with THE BAPTISM with which I AM BAPTIZED"
"THE CUP THAT I DRINK you [both] shall drink"
"you [both] shall be baptized with THE BAPTISM with which I AM BAPTIZED"

- Notice what *Eusebius* and *Irenaeus* (late second century) said about **Papias** in relation to the apostle John and his martyrdom [Source: Eusebius (ca. 260–340), *Chronicle*. Text: A. Schöne, *Eusebi Chronicorum canonum quae supersunt*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Weidemann, 1866), 162.]:
  Pap. 5:5 Papias says in his second book that John the Theologian and James his brother were **killed by Jews**.
  Pap. 6:3 For Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, who had seen him with his own eyes, claims in the second book of the *Sayings of the Lord* that **John was killed by Jews, thus clearly fulfilling, together with his brother, Christ's prophecy concerning them** and their own confession and agreement about this.
  Pap. 6:4 For when the Lord said to them, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" and they eagerly assented and agreed, he said: "You will drink **my cup** and will be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized."
  Pap. 6:5 And this is to be expected, for it is impossible for God to lie.
  Pap. 6:6 [Eusebius said later] Moreover the encyclopedic Origen also affirms in his interpretation of the Gospel according to Matthew that **John was martyred**, indicating that he had learned this from the successors of the apostles [i.e., possibly referring to Papias].

- Papias claimed that John was killed by the Jews, evidently at a time when they still had the ability and opportunity to do so. This would point to the Neronic persecution (AD 64), until it was cut short by the outbreak of the Jewish revolt (AD 66). It would not have been easy for them to do much against Christians after the war began, and especially not after the war ended.
- The Jews had no political or judicial power to kill anyone after 70. It clearly points to a time before 70 when the Jews would have had the authority, opportunity, and means by which to do it. The Neronic persecution fits that description well, since that is when the Jews were in their most powerful position against the Christians.
- As we look at the Biblical evidence in Matthew 20, Mark 10, and John 21, we notice that it points unambiguously toward the conclusion that Apostle John must have died before the Parousia.
- The death of John before AD 70 would absolutely clinch the pre-70 date of all the Johannine writings. And it would completely negate all the other objections that futurists have raised against the preterist view using John's supposed longevity beyond AD 70.
- It needs to be noted here that my views have changed regarding the reason why John was no longer around after AD 70. In the first edition of my rapture book, I took the position that John was not around after AD 70 because he was raptured. Those who were raptured did not experience physical death, but were simply CHANGED into their new immortal bodies as they were caught up to be with Christ in the unseen spiritual realm. Thus, if John was still alive at the time of the Parousia, he would not have died (experienced the death of his physical body). He would simply have been changed and snatched away to be with Christ. However, that is no longer the position I hold in regard to John.
- My settled position now is that John was no longer around after AD 70 because he was killed by the Jews before the Parousia, not because he was raptured. John suffered martyrdom before the Parousia and did not live and remain until the Parousia, nor afterwards. Therefore, he was not raptured. It was the words of Papias and other later church fathers which alerted me to the probability that John suffered martyrdom sometime after his exile to Patmos (AD 62) and before the Parousia (AD 66). Papias pointed to Matthew 20 and Mark 10. These two texts are far more convincing than any of the traditions, because they come from infallible inspired Scripture.

Overview of the Sequence and Dates for John's Writings:

From comparing the contents of John's three epistles with each other, and with his gospel and apocalypse, it seems that the sequence of writing must be as follows:

1. Gospel of John (Late 60 or Early 61)
2. First John (Early 61)
3. Second and Third John (Late 61 or Early 62))
4. The Book of Revelation (Mid-to-Late 62)

***Here is the reasoning for this sequence**:* The gospel of John seems to have been written at a time when Luke was not aware of its contents. If it had been written before Luke and Paul went to Rome in AD 60, then there most likely would have been some subtle allusions to its contents in the gospel of Luke. However, it is John's gospel which shows some awareness of Luke's gospel, and not the other way around. Therefore it seems that John's gospel was written after Luke and Paul went to Rome (Fall of 60). We say more about this below.

The opening verses of John's first epistle briefly allude to concepts about the Logos, Life, and Light which presuppose the readers are already familiar with his gospel where these themes are fully developed. That alone is very strong evidence that the gospel had already been written, and was already in circulation, before John wrote his first epistle.

John's first epistle was written to stabilize some churches (probably Paul's churches in Turkey) who were being troubled by false teachers who had gone out from the Jerusalem church. Since Paul was in prison in Rome, and was not able to visit them, he must have requested the apostles in Jerusalem (Peter, John, and James) to provide some oversight while he was preparing for his trial. John's first epistle seems to be providing help to Paul's stressed churches. First John was written from Jerusalem, since John says the false teachers "went out from us" (1 Jn 2:19). This shows that it was not written from Patmos, since he states that he was still a part of the church from which those false teachers had gone out. There was no church on Patmos, nor could the false teachers have gone out from Patmos. If John was in fact writing to Paul's churches while Paul was in Rome, that would date First John no earlier than late 60 or early 61 right after Paul had been taken to Rome, and no later than John's exile to Patmos in April of 62. Since there are two more epistles to squeeze in here before John was exiled, it implies that First John was written fairly soon after Paul left for Rome (early 61) and soon after John's gospel was put in circulation.

The possibility exists that his first epistle may have been written immediately after the gospel was finished, and then sent along with the gospel to those troubled churches. If the false teachers who were disturbing those churches were Gnostic, the sending of the gospel together with first epistle would make a lot of sense. It would deliver a double blow against the Gnostics. The first epistle tells us exactly who his gospel was targeting, since it alludes to those same Logos, Light, and Life ideas that are fully developed in his gospel, which completely demolishes the Gnostic belief system.

Regarding the connection between John's epistles and the refutation of the Gnostics, R. R. Williams states in his Cambridge commentary on the Letters of John that: *"It is clear to those who know the religious history of the first and second centuries A.D. that the situation to which 1 John is addressed corresponds closely to that produced by the school of thought called gnostic or more precisely docetic-gnostic."* [R. R. Williams, *The Letters of John and James*. Part of *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1965. p. 9]

A further clue as to the kind of Gnosticism John was confronting in his gospel and epistles may be found in 1 Jn 2:19 where he says, "they went out from us." This particular brand of Gnosticism came from a Jewish base. It was not coming from Greece, Rome, or Alexandria. That is why it was so deceptive and dangerous. It was coming from a Jewish framework which was similar enough to Judaism and Jewish Christianity that the unwary saints were fooled by it.

Second John mentions that the couriers who had visited those churches with his first epistle had brought back word to him that some of those churches were "walking in truth" and had not been deceived by the false teachers he mentioned in his first epistle. John further warns them about those deceivers, and says that he hopes to visit them to set the rest of the matters straight. This implies an interval of at least a few months, if not several months, between the composition of his first epistle and his two later ones (i.e., enough time for the couriers to deliver the first epistle to those churches, and then return to John with a report about their condition).

Second John was evidently written to a specific church (or maybe a group of churches in a certain region), whereas John's third epistle was written to an individual (Gaius). This is similar to Paul's two prison epistles (Colossians and Philemon), one of which was written to the church, while the other was a personal letter to one of the leaders in that church. And just like both Colossians and Philemon were sent out at the same time by the same courier, that appears to be the case with John's **second and third epistles**. Both of them mention John's reluctance to write all of his concerns down on paper (2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 13-14), and his intention to visit them and personally help them set things in order. It is his reluctance to "write with paper and ink" and his "hope" to visit them and "speak face to face" which strongly implies that these two books were written and sent at the same time via the same courier (2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 13-14).

The question naturally arises as to the identity of the Gaius to whom **3 John** was addressed. From verse 4 it seems possible that this particular Gaius might have been a disciple of John when he refers to Gaius as one of "my children." But that may simply be the way John addressed all the saints under his care. There are at least two different men with that name, maybe as many as four: Gaius of Macedonia, Gaius of Derbe, Gaius of Corinth, and the Gaius here in 3 Jn 1 (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14; 3 Jn 1). So it is hard to tell whether this Gaius mentioned by John is the same as one of the others, or a different one altogether. The Gaius of Macedonia was with Paul in Ephesus in AD 57 when Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians (Acts 19:29). However, there is a tradition which says: "The Gaius to whom 3 John is addressed ... has been identified by some with the Gaius mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (7:46), as having been appointed bishop of Pergamum by John" [*ISBE*, article on Gaius].

Pergamum was one of the seven cities of Asia, to whom the book of Revelation was addressed, and the church there is thought to have been originally established by one of Paul's fellow workers. This lends some credence to the idea that John wrote his three epistles to the churches of Asia at the request of Paul, who was in prison in Rome and thus unable to provide any oversight to those churches in Asia that he and his fellow workers had established. This cannot be proven, but it would make a lot of sense if John was writing to those churches in Asia while he was still in Jerusalem (AD 61) and before he was exiled to Patmos (AD 62), at the time Paul was in Rome preparing his defense for trial before Nero.

If those suggestions have any historical merit, it would also help explain why the book of Revelation, written about a year later from Patmos off the coast of Asia, seems to address those Asian churches of Paul from a position of previous acquaintance and authoritative oversight. Furthermore, the cities of Asia were known to have Jewish Gnostics among them, the very kind of Gnosticism that all of John's writings (gospel, epistles, and Revelation) seem to be combating.

Date of John's Gospel (AD 60-61)

Late 60 or Early 61 – <u>The Gospel of John</u> – A brief note about the authorship, then a discussion about the date: There are some who think the fourth gospel was not written by the Apostle John. They instead prefer Lazarus as the author. However, by comparing all four gospels and their historical narratives about the Last Supper, the trial and crucifixion, the burial, the resurrection, and the post-resurrection appearances, it is easy to see that the author could NOT have been Lazarus. A four-page PDF is available which provides the evidence to prove that John was the author of the fourth gospel. If you would like to have that PDF, simply email me and request it. The title is "Lazarus NOT the Author."

Some interpreters of the gospel of John have noted that John 5:2 implies that John was in Jerusalem at the time of writing this gospel, and that it was evidently written before AD 70, since it mentions the pool of Bethesda as still being there at the time of writing. That pool was covered up with debris in AD 70. Here is the passage, note the present tenses: "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there **IS [present tense]** in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which **IS [present tense]** called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters..." (John 5:1-2 NAS95). Note what textual scholar Daniel B. Wallace had to say about the implications of the present tense "IS" used twice here in John 5:2 –

> ...In the end, our judgment seems (for now, at least) to be unshaken: “Since EIMI is nowhere else clearly used as a historical present, the present tense [in John 5:2] **should be taken as indicating present time from the viewpoint of the speaker**” (D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996] 531). ... I believe that exegetes would do well to not neglect what seems to be **the obvious indication as to the time of writing of this Gospel [i.e., before AD 70].** In the least, it will not do to argue, as many have, that too much weight cannot be put on the present tense. That is a judgment that can only have force if it is demonstrated that the present tense here could have a variety of forces, any one of which could plausibly view it as referring to past time. Until that happens, **I would urge exegetes to take the ESTIN more seriously in John 5:2 as a significant factor in the dating of John’s Gospel.** [Found here: https://bible.org/article/john-52-and-date-fourth-gospel-again] [For more information on this, see the more detailed article by D. B. Wallace entitled, "John 5:2 and the Date of the Fourth Gospel," *Bib* 71 (1990): 177-205.]

In an email dated Feb 20, 2010, Alex DeAngelo summed up this argument for the pre-70 date of John's gospel very nicely:

> There is a problem with the late date of the Gospel (i.e., post-70). In John 5:2, he writes "Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades." Notice that sentence, in two places (when he specifies that it is in Jerusalem, and when he describes it) he uses the present tense. Doesn't that say that Jerusalem was still standing when he wrote this, which means it was written prior to A.D. 70. My study Bible says that John sometimes used the present tense to describe past events. But in 5:3, John writes, "Here a great number of disabled people used to lie-the blind, the lame, the paralyzed." This sentence is past tense. So John, from one verse to the next, goes from present tense to past tense. But when I read it, it seems that John is describing something that is presently still standing at the time of writing, but which Jesus had encountered in the past. As a matter of fact, John 5:1-15, with the exception of the description of the pool near the Sheep gate in verse 2, is ALL past tense, implying that the Sheep Gate, and therefore Jerusalem, was still standing when this was written.

According to Eusebius, the gospel of John was not written until after the other three gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) were already available (by AD 62 at the latest). But that may only be the way it appears because of the wide separation between John in Palestine and Luke in Rome. Because of the historical circumstances of Paul's voyage to Rome and the shipwreck on the way, it would seem necessary that both the gospel of Luke and his book of Acts (chapters 1-26) were written after they arrived in Rome.

Luke probably did most of his research for his gospel while he was there in Judea during Paul's two-year imprisonment in Caesarea. Maybe Luke's interest in composing a gospel account may have stimulated John to write also. John may have begun work on his gospel at the time Paul was there in prison in Caesarea (AD 58-60), or right after Paul was sent to Rome (late 60), and then finished it by early 61, at the same time Luke was writing his two-volume work (Luke-Acts) in Rome. Because of the distance between their two locations (Jerusalem vs. Rome), their writings were almost totally independent of each other. They could easily have been written at the same time, and not copied, distributed, and added to the canonical collection until late 61 or 62.

So, it seems to me that John's gospel was probably written about the time of Paul's journey to Rome, or shortly afterwards during Paul's first year of imprisonment. Since I think John was sent to Patmos in the Spring of AD 62, I place the writing of his gospel in that two year period between Paul's voyage to Rome (Fall 60) and John's exile to Patmos (April 62). That means it was written before his exile to Patmos. He would have written it at a time when the gospel was still being fervently preached, while there was still a need for such gospel writings, and while it was still safe to send such documents out to the churches (i.e., definitely before the Neronic persecution in AD 64). Eusebius places its writing not long after the other three gospels, because John had seen them and noticed that they did not cover some of the earlier history of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry before John was imprisoned, plus some other details about his role as an eyewitness at the tomb of Jesus on resurrection morning, which the other gospel accounts did not mention.

There does not seem to be any indication that Luke had seen John's gospel, but John appears to have been aware of Luke's account of Peter running to the tomb. But that does not mean that Luke's account was already finished. When Luke was doing his research in Jerusalem, he evidently did not consult with John, but only Peter. When John realized that Luke did not have the whole story about that incident of Peter (and John) running to the tomb, he may have decided to produce his own gospel account and include that story. In that case, it did not require Luke's gospel to already be written, but merely that John was aware of Luke's lack of full information about it. When John realized that Luke did not have the full story and had already gone to Rome, John may have decided to write the rest of the story in his own account of the gospel. This is why I suggest that John's gospel was probably not written until Paul's journey to Rome, or shortly afterwards during Paul's first year of imprisonment (AD 60-61). Since I think John was exiled to Patmos in the Spring of AD 62, that would give us a range of a year and a half between Paul's voyage to Rome (Fall 60) and John's exile to Patmos (April 62).

Both Luke and John seem to draw material from Matthew and Mark. But Luke does not borrow any of the exclusive material in John’s gospel. However, there is one parallel between Luke and John

which hints at John being influenced by Luke's version of the story (Lk. 24:9-12 and Jn. 20:2-10). So this would suggest that John's gospel was probably written after he had seen Matthew and Mark's less-detailed accounts of that story, and after hearing Peter tell his side of the story to Luke (i.e., during the time Luke was in Jerusalem doing his research while Paul was in prison in nearby Caesarea, AD 58-60, before Luke and Paul went to Rome). While Luke was there in Jerusalem gathering his research for his gospel, he most likely collaborated with Peter and heard this story from Peter, which had not been recorded in Matthew and Mark. John probably knew that Luke had only heard Peter's side of the story, and decided to tell the rest of the story in his own gospel account. John may have already noticed the briefer accounts in Matthew and Mark, and already planned to write a fuller account from his own perspective. Luke only mentioned Peter running to the tomb, which suggests that he had not heard John's side of the story, or else he decided to let John tell the rest of the story in his own gospel account. This would date the gospel of John as early as the Fall of AD 60, just after Paul and Luke left on their voyage to Rome, or as late as early 62 before John was exiled to Patmos.

An analysis of A. T. Robertson's *Harmony of the Gospels* (which includes all four gospels) is what pushed me in this direction, since the gospel of Luke does not show any evidence of drawing any of its material from the gospel of John. There is only one story which is found both in Luke and John (but not in Matthew or Mark) – Peter and John running to the empty tomb (Lk. 24:9-12 and Jn. 20:2-10). After analysis, it seems that the only one of the two writers (Luke and John) who appear to have been influenced by the other is John. Luke's account does not mention John running to the tomb with Peter. John's account is the fuller account and mentions John's role in this story along with Peter.

This kind of comparison study of the four gospels is very revealing, especially in regard to determining the dates and sequence of writing of each of them. If you are interested in historical reconstruction, this would be a good training exercise for you.

It seems to me that John had either read Luke's version, or knew that Luke's research had not included that story about John running to the tomb, and decided to tell the rest of the story. There would have been no reason for Luke to leave out John's role in the story if he had seen John's account of it, or if he had talked to John while doing his research, so that implies that John's gospel had not been written at the time Luke was doing his research there in Judea (AD 58-60).

Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that John, knowing that Luke's research did not or would not include this story, would want to fill in the details and record his own role in that story. Luke's account of this was obviously not drawn from Matthew or Mark (since they don't include it), so it may have been one of those stories that Luke had heard in his interactions with Peter, and Peter simply failed to mention John's running to the tomb alongside of him. If this analysis is correct, it suggests that John knew that Luke's gospel would not (or did not) include this story, and was stimulated to write a fuller account of those things that the other three gospels failed to include. This agrees with Eusebius' assertions about the order of composition of the four gospels, and the reasons behind John's differences (Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* Bk. 3, Ch. 24, Sect. 6-13).

3Euseb. 24:6 For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence.
3Euseb. 24:7 And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry.
3Euseb. 24:8 And this indeed is true. For it is evident that the three evangelists recorded only the deeds done by the Savior for one year after the imprisonment of John the Baptist, and indicated this in the beginning of their account.
3Euseb. 24:9 For Matthew, after the forty days' fast and the temptation which followed it, indicates the chronology of his work when he says: "Now when he heard that John was delivered up he withdrew from Judea into Galilee."
3Euseb. 24:10 Mark likewise says: "Now after that John was delivered up Jesus came into Galilee." And Luke, before commencing his account of the deeds of Jesus, similarly marks the time, when he says that Herod, "adding to all the evil deeds which he had done, shut up John in prison."

3Euseb. 24:11 They say, therefore, that the apostle John, being asked to do it for this reason, gave in his Gospel an account of the period which had been omitted by the earlier evangelists, and of the deeds done by the Savior during that period; that is, of those which were done before the imprisonment of the Baptist. And this is indicated by him, they say, in the following words: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus"; and again when he refers to the Baptist, in the midst of the deeds of Jesus, as still baptizing in Aenon near Salim; where he states the matter clearly in the words: "For John was not yet cast into prison."
3Euseb. 24:12 John accordingly, in his Gospel, records the deeds of Christ which were performed before the Baptist was cast into prison, but the other three evangelists mention the events which happened after that time.
3Euseb. 24:13 One who understands this can no longer think that the Gospels are at variance with one another, inasmuch as the Gospel according to John contains the first acts of Christ, while the others give an account of the latter part of his life. And the genealogy of our Savior according to the flesh John quite naturally omitted, because it had been already given by Matthew and Luke, and began with the doctrine of his divinity, which had, as it were, been reserved for him, as their superior, by the divine Spirit.

This suggests that John's gospel was probably written about the same time as Luke's (AD 61-62), or else right after John had seen the research that Luke had accumulated while Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (AD 60-61). This would date it no earlier than the late Fall of AD 60 while Paul was on his voyage to Rome, with the upper limit on its composition being the Spring of AD 62, just before John was arrested and exiled to Patmos. This means his gospel, and his two epistles, were most likely written in that one and a half year period between Paul's voyage to Rome (Fall of AD 60) and John's exile to Patmos (Spring of AD 62). His three smaller epistles were probably also finished before his exile (Spring 62), with the book of Revelation written shortly after he was exiled (Summer 62). We will say more about the three epistles of John and his book of Revelation below. Here are some websites and other resources which support these early dates for John's writings:

1. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating The New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) gives reason to think that most of the Gospels *were* well in circulation by the time Paul was writing to the Corinthians (AD 57).
2. John W. Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark & Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton ,1991.)
3. Carelinks Ministries website: Article: "Paul's Use of the Gospels" accessed on 5/19/12 at the following website link: http://www.aletheiacollege.net/bl/14-6-1Paul_Use_Of_The_Gospels.htm
4. See the following website also: http://www.pleaseconvinceme.com/index/Are_There_Early_Eyewitness_Accounts_of_Jesus

Dates of the Three Epistles of John (AD 61-62)

AD 61-62 – Epistles of 1, 2, 3 John Were Written. Since letters like this were sent by couriers who quite often carried other books and letters with them, it is likely that these three letters were written after the Gospel of John was finished. The first of these letters may have been sent by the same courier that carried John's gospel in early 61. The other two letters may have been written in the one year period between the gospel (AD 60-61) and John's exile to Patmos (Spring 62).

Since John was probably arrested at the same time as James (Apr 62), it means that John most likely wrote his three short epistles about the same time James wrote his epistle (late 61 or very early 62) just before they were arrested by Ananus II (Apr 62). The third of his three epistles could have been written about the same time James wrote his epistle (late 61 or very early 62), and sent via the same courier. Not one of these three epistles mention John's arrest or imprisonment on the island of Patmos, nor do they contain any subtle reflections of his writing under exile conditions, or of his residence in Ephesus later. Because of his exile under **Ananus II**, who was still alive until AD 68, he would not have been allowed to return to Palestine, even if he was freed from Patmos. It is most likely that he would have taken up residence in nearby Ephesus, if he was released from Patmos. And there

are subtle hints in Paul's epistle to Titus (in AD 63) that **Zenas** the lawyer and **Apollos** the orator may have traveled to Patmos to secure John's release, at which time he would have taken up residence in nearby Ephesus (the first of the seven churches to which his Apocalypse was addressed).

Both of John's second and third letters state John's intention to soon visit the church(es) to whom he was writing. This sounds like he was in Jerusalem (before his exile to Patmos), planning to travel to churches outside Palestine. That was the pattern for the letters of Peter and James. They wrote from Jerusalem to the churches outside Palestine. John appears to be following that same pattern. The internal evidence of all three books points to a time before his arrest and exile to Patmos. If they had been written while he was in exile on Patmos, there would most likely be some references to the seven churches in Turkey, and to his state of imprisonment on Patmos. John says in 1 John that "it is the Last Hour" (2:18), "the world is passing away" (2:17), "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (5:19), and "the spirit of the antichrist…is already in the world" (4:3). Because of this strong imminency language here in 1 John, it seems quite likely that these three epistles were written just as the tribulation (AD 60-64) was beginning to heat up, but before it got so bad that they could no longer travel safely (AD 64-65) or send letters to the scattered churches – as would have been the case after the Neronic persecution broke out in the Summer of 64. The other NT epistles which use this same kind of intense imminency language were all written in this same time frame (AD 60-64).

- **1 John – Two possible dates:** (1) Written from Jerusalem before he was exiled to Patmos (AD 61), or (2) Written from Ephesus after he was released from Patmos (AD 63). This book opens up much like his gospel, clearly directed against the Gnostics who were teaching Docetism and Dualism. There is a subtle hint in **1 Jn 2:19** that can be interpreted differently to support either date. John talks about some antichrists who "went out from us" (the church where John was). This certainly could apply to the church in Jerusalem, but it could also apply to the church in Ephesus. We know that Gnostics were in Ephesus, and that they were spreading their Gnostic teaching all over the area. This kind of strong language against the Gnostics would easily fit a residence of John right there in Ephesus, because it reveals a first-hand knowledge of what was going on in Ephesus and the other nearby cities of the Lycos valley. But John could have heard about the situation in Ephesus while he was still in Jerusalem, and could have written to those churches from his residence in Jerusalem. The whole anti-Gnostic tone of the letter implies it was sent TO a whole group of churches, possibly including Greece, Macedonia, Turkey, Cyprus and Syria. John would not be writing these things ONLY to the churches in Asia Minor if he was living right there in the area. He would have simply visited those nearby churches, or had their leaders come visit him in Ephesus. So, if John wrote this letter from Ephesus after he was released from imprisonment on Patmos, it would have been written as a general encyclical for all the churches in Greece, Macedonia, Turkey, Cyprus, and Syria. And the same can be said about the letter if it was written from Jerusalem before his exile. It most likely was a general encyclical that would have been circulated among all the churches that were affected by the Hellenistic Gnosticism that was beginning to develop throughout all those areas. **1 Jn 4:3** says that the spirit of antichrist, which they had heard was coming, was now active in the world. Note John's reference to the fact that they had already been warned about the coming of these antichrists. This raises the question about when and where and how they had been warned about them. Was this warning in a previous letter to them? Or is John referring to the book of Revelation as that warning? These antichrists had gone out from the church wherever John was, and were now out in the world deceiving and working against the true teachings about Christ, denying His Messiahship, Deity, Incarnation and the need to be sanctified and godly. Furthermore, in **1 Jn 5:19-21** he says that "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" and that they should guard themselves from idols. This idea of the spirit of antichrist now being out in the world is another clue to the time of writing. But it was already the kind of situation they were facing before John was exiled. The warning about idol worship is similar to what he had said in the book of Revelation, but not as intense as those expressions in the Apocalypse. The activity of the evil one is starting to happen. *The world is passing away, it is the last hour, Christ was soon to appear.* Again, this echoes the intense language we find in the book of Revelation, suggesting that 1 John could have been written after John's release from Patmos in early 63, after he had already written the book of Revelation. But it would just as easily fit the situation while John was still in Jerusalem, right before he was sent into exile in the Spring of 62. If it was written before his exile, it gives us some great commentary on what John says to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. Comparing these two descriptions of the condition of the churches in Asia Minor at the time of writing both the Apocalypse

and his first epistle, gives us some further clues as to the time of writing for this epistle of First John. For instance, the situation in those churches to whom he is writing, was beginning to become difficult, but it had not yet reached the level of rebellion and apostasy that we see mentioned in the book of Revelation, thus suggesting that John's first epistle was written before the book of Revelation. In First John, things had reached the "concerned" stage, but not the "crisis" stage yet. The book of Revelation paints it more as a crisis. Then in late 63 and early 64 the situation erupted into open rebellion (beyond crisis) when "all who are in Asia" turned away from Apostle Paul and Christianity. This letter does not fit the latter situation of late 63 and early 64. Instead, it fits the earlier time (AD 60-62) before the situation reached crisis stage. See also the reasoning for the early date of Second and Third John below. Some of that reasoning applies here as well.

• **2 John – Two possible dates:** (1) Written from Jerusalem before he was exiled to Patmos (AD 61), or (2) Written from Ephesus after he was released from Patmos (AD 63). This is difficult to date, just like the first epistle, and for virtually the same reasons. However, there are a couple of statements in the epistle which tend to make more sense if it was written from Ephesus AFTER his release from Patmos. Notice **2 Jn 4** where he says that he was "very glad to FIND some of them walking in truth." This could imply that John had visited them recently, but more likely that someone had visited them and reported to him about their condition, and that as a result of this, he had "found" some of them walking in the truth. The latter idea of someone reporting their condition to John is further augmented by his statement in **2 Jn 12** that he "hoped to come to them and speak face to face," evidently sometime soon. Notice that this visit would be "face to face" implying that the previous visit was not by John, but by someone who reported their condition to John. This would better fit a writing from Jerusalem, before he was exiled to Patmos. This also implies an interval of at least a few months between the composition of his first epistle and the last two (2 and 3 John).

Second John seems to be a general encyclical written to the whole church ("the elect lady" – i.e. the Bride of Christ, the Church) and all her children (2 Jn 1). This language could be more easily applied to a writing from Jerusalem before his exile. Since this epistle is somewhat obscure in its references to its intended recipients, it suggests that it was written at a time when the persecution was heating up, when such encoded messages would have been necessary. But it was evidently still safe enough for epistle writing and courier activity, which points to a time before his exile to Patmos. After his release from Patmos in mid-63 or later, things were getting pretty dangerous in western Turkey around Ephesus. That is when "all who are in Asia turned away" from Paul, and where Paul was evidently arrested a second time and sent to Rome for execution. So, it does not seem likely that John would have been writing any letters after his release. It would have been too dangerous for the scribes and couriers. Nor would it have been safe for John to go on a major trip to visit all those churches in late 63. So I tend to date all three of these epistles before his exile.

Both Second and Third John mention John's reluctance to write all of his concerns down on paper (2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 13-14), and his intentions instead to come visit them and personally help them set things in order. It is his reluctance to "write with paper and ink" and his "hope" to visit them and "speak face to face" which strongly implies that these two books were written and sent at the same time via the same courier (2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 13-14).

• **3 John – Two possible dates:** (1) Written from Jerusalem before he was exiled to Patmos (AD 61), or (2) Written from Ephesus after he was released from Patmos (AD 63). It is possible to date this epistle before John's exile to Patmos, but it is just as plausible to date it after his release from Patmos. There are several complicating factors here, which should give us clarity, but instead make it more difficult to nail down. **3 John 1** – The letter is addressed to Gaius. Is this the same Gaius who lived in Corinth (Rom. 16:23), or the fellow worker of Paul that came from Derbe and Macedonia (Acts 19:29; 20:4), or another Gaius altogether? We do not know for sure. However, this Gaius was evidently loosely connected with a church whose leader (Diotrephes) had refused to support the traveling evangelists that John had sent through that area. John urges Gaius to support the traveling evangelists who were bringing this letter to him (**3 Jn 5-8**), and not to follow the bad example of Diotrephes (**3 Jn 9-11**) who had refused to support those traveling missionaries and excommunicated any of the church members who did support them. **3 John 12** – John recommends Demetrius to Gaius, suggesting perhaps that Demetrius may have been one of the messengers carrying this letter. Evidently Demetrius was previously known to the church there, as well as by Gaius, but for some reason needed John's

recommendation and endorsement to make him acceptable to Gaius and the church there. Evidently John felt that since they already knew Demetrius, that John's endorsement would carry further weight in getting them to support such traveling missionaries. John says (3 Jn 13-14) that he had a lot more to write to them, but that he would save that for a personal visit "shortly." Reading between the lines, it seems as though this letter was a warning to Gaius and perhaps Diotrephes, that they needed to change their ways, because John was coming there personally (and "shortly") to set matters straight if they had not already been corrected by the time he got there. All three of the names mentioned in this epistle (Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius) are Greek names, suggesting that this church was in Greece, Macedonia, or Turkey. The fact that John was planning to come visit them "shortly" implies he is writing from Jerusalem. We would have to wonder why John would write to those churches in Asia if he was dwelling right there in the area after his release from Patmos. He could more easily have gone to visit them instead. The state of the church under Diotrephes, which obviously had a dictatorial type of leader, instead of being led by a group of elders, easily fits a time before his exile when the churches of Asia had so many problems (as also was mentioned in the book of Revelation). After his exile it would have been more dangerous to go visit that church and set it in order. Even writing letters to it would be dangerous in late 63. This condition of the church, and his warning that he was intending to visit them soon, seemingly fits a pre-Patmos scenario in Jerusalem better. Evidently it was written at a time when it was still safe for evangelists to do mission trips, obviously before the Neronic persecution, and probably before his exile to Patmos.

Luke-Acts Written in Rome (AD 61-62)

Since these two books (Luke-Acts) appear to be written to a Gentile audience, and include several encounters with the governmental authorities and the courts, which supply legal precedents for Nero's court to follow, the weight of evidence favors the idea that Luke-Acts were written for one of Nero's court officials right after Paul and Luke reached Rome in the Spring of 61, and were most likely finished by the Spring of 62 before Paul's case went to trial in Nero's court. Since the book of Acts ends with Paul's release from Roman imprisonment, the book of Acts must have been finished no later than 63. But there is good reason to believe that the main corpus of Acts was finished long before Paul's trial before Nero began in late 62 or early 63.

Paul would have known, even before he reached Rome, that he would need a good defense to get him acquitted before Nero, so he would have needed Luke to at least gather all the facts, do his research, and at least make some notes before heading toward Rome. How early in the Caesarean imprisonment Luke began doing his research and making his notes is difficult to guess, but it was probably hastened along once Paul realized he would have to appeal to Caesar. The plot by 40 men to ambush and kill him would have been enough to make him start thinking about getting out of Judea, and his Roman citizenship would have come readily to mind, especially after Jesus appeared to him in jail there in Jerusalem in AD 58 and told him that he must testify for the gospel in Rome also (Acts 23:11). That would have given him the idea that he would have to testify in Roman court somehow. It would not have taken any imagination for him to see what Jesus was alluding to. All he had to do was wait for the appropriate moment to make the appeal to Caesar. That opportunity came in his hearing before Festus and Agrippa, when they asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem again for another trial there. Paul knew that would only get him killed, so he appealed to Nero instead. Paul could have commissioned Luke to begin gathering his information in preparation for writing a document like Luke-Acts while they were still in Caesarea. There might even have been an early version of the two documents written then, which they might have taken with them on the voyage to Rome.

However, it is not likely that any copies of Luke or Acts would have survived the shipwreck, forcing both books to have been recreated after arriving in Rome, unless they had left a copy in Jerusalem which was then recopied and sent to Rome after Paul arrived there. It seems most likely that the versions of Luke-Acts that we have now, were both composed in Rome soon after they arrived there (AD 61-62), so that Paul would have them ready before his case went to trial in late 62 or early 63. Chapters 27-28 of Acts could not have been written until after they reached Rome in AD 61. The last three verses of Acts 28 (verses 29-31) appear to have been written by Luke after Paul's release in AD 63, and appended to the otherwise finished book of Acts. Since Acts chapters 27-28 could not have been written until after they reached Rome in 61, it would seem likely that the rest of the book of Acts was written then also, or at

least expanded and updated from a previous smaller edition, especially in view of Acts 11:24 which seems to eulogize Barnabas after his death in 60-61.

According to tradition, Barnabas already had a copy of Matthew's gospel at the time he took Mark to Cyprus, so that Mark could have brought with him a copy of Matthew's gospel, along with his own gospel of Mark, to Paul in Rome. Luke then would have had access to the other two gospel accounts, enabling him to easily compose a new account that was directed toward a gentile audience (especially in Nero's court in Rome). This would explain why all three gospels are so similar in content and organization.

According to two different traditions, Barnabas died no later than the AD 60-61 timeframe. Both traditions say that just before Barnabas was killed by the Jews on Cyprus (AD 60-61), he had instructed Mark to go to Paul after his death. Since we see Mark showing up with Paul in Rome in 61, it implies that Barnabas died just before that (AD 60). According to this same tradition, just before Barnabas was killed by the Jews on Cyprus (AD 60-61), he instructed Mark to bury him with his copy of Matthew's gospel, and then go to Paul and join him. Mark could easily have made a copy of Matthew's gospel and taken it, along with his own gospel of Mark, to Paul and Luke in Rome. The death of Barnabas and Mark's reunion with Paul in Rome in AD 61 implies that the book of Acts was not put in its final form until after Paul got to Rome (AD 61), since Acts 11:24 eulogizes Barnabas and speaks of him in the past tense as if he was already dead. That statement helps date the book of Acts no earlier than AD 60-61. This harmonizes all the Biblical and historical evidence.

Matthew was written first (before AD 41). Barnabas had a copy of Matthew, which Mark used to compose his own version (cir. AD 41-44). Luke then used both Matthew and Mark to compose his synoptic account (AD 61-62). Those who have done careful analysis of the three gospels have noticed that Mark has additional material that Matthew does not have, suggesting that Mark was written later. Same thing for Luke. He has some unique material that was not borrowed from either Matthew or Mark, suggesting that Luke was written after Matthew and Mark were already available. This again points to the probability that Luke-Acts were written in Rome shortly after Paul arrived there, and finished before his case went to trial before Nero (late 62 or early 63).

AD 61 – <u>Gospel of Luke</u> was written soon after Luke and Paul reached Rome. However, Luke probably did all the research for his gospel and the first twelve chapters of Acts during the two years Paul was in prison in Caesarea. There are many stylistic considerations and historical allusions in both Luke and Acts which clearly point to their being written for a Gentile audience in Nero's court at Rome (in AD 61-62). Since this relates to the identity of the person to whom Luke addressed his two books, we have included more information on Theophilus below.

AD 61-62 – <u>Book of Acts</u> was written in Rome right after Luke finished his gospel account. As mentioned above, Luke probably did a lot of the research for his gospel and the first twelve chapters of Acts during the two years Paul was in prison in Caesarea. However, there are a lot of stylistic considerations and historical allusions (in Acts especially) which clearly point to its being written for a Gentile audience in Nero's court at Rome (in AD 61-62). Since the date and location of writing for both Luke and Acts directly relates to the identity of Theophilus, we need to take another look at that here. We had mentioned another theory on the identity of Theophilus above under the subheading: "Who Was Most Excellent Theophilus" at the dates AD 58-60. Below is the rest of the story about him.

The Identity of Theophilus:

An obvious question arises as to what kind of government official would need, request, or expect a full briefing on all the “facts in consecutive order” regarding Christianity and Paul’s involvement with it. We suggested previously that this could have been the former High Priest **Theophilus** who might have used the unjust treatment of Apostle Paul by the rival High Priest Ananias as a means to get Ananias deposed.

However, it seems unlikely that Paul or any of the apostles would get involved in party politics like that, especially to the point of writing two whole books for their use. If Theophilus was a former High Priest of the Ananus family, he would have already known most of the facts about the gospel and the history of the church in Jerusalem after Pentecost. He would not have needed these two books written for his instruction. Nor would these two books have been written with a clearly Gentile audience in mind. If they were written to a former Jewish High Priest, it would be written in a Jewish style. A Jewish High Priest

would only have wanted material which clarified Paul's relationship to the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the facts about his unlawful arrest in the temple and his unlawful treatment in the trial before Ananias. Furthermore, Luke apparently wrote both books for a Gentile audience, not a Jewish one. It therefore seems unlikely that Theophilus was a Jewish ruler, and much more likely that he was a Roman court official or defense attorney for Paul.

While at the *Evangelical Theological Society* meeting (Nov. 2012), I had the chance to talk to Dr. Dennis Swanson, one of the professors at *The Master's Seminary* in the Los Angeles area. He has done quite a bit of study on the date of Luke and Acts. He is convinced that both Luke and Acts were written in Rome while Paul was awaiting his trial there (AD 61-62). He agrees with many conservative scholars that Theophilus was probably a Roman government official, acting on behalf of the Roman court, to discover whether there was any substantial case against Paul, and to inform Nero of the results of his investigation before the case went to trial. It is also possible that Theophilus was the defense attorney for Paul, even though Paul had always served as his own attorney up to this time.

If Theophilus was a defense attorney in Rome, he would have needed all this information from Luke in order to adequately defend Paul in Rome, or to adequately inform the court about the facts in the case. However, such an appointment of a defense attorney could not have happened until after Paul reached Rome in AD 61. This means that the two-volume work of Luke could not have been written (or at least not finished or put in final form) until after Paul arrived in Rome. However, Luke could have done all his research for it while he was in Judea during those two years Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (AD 58-60). He would have had easy and abundant access to the other apostles in Jerusalem at that time, so his research for Luke-Acts was probably done then, even though the actual writing did not take place until they reached Rome. He could have made a lot of notes then, which he used later in the actual writing of the two books. As we noted earlier, there are some Synoptic Problem scholars who have suggested this very thing, that Luke may have been drawing from an earlier version ("proto-Luke") of his notes and research materials to compose his two books. How those were preserved through the shipwreck, however, would need some explanation. Perhaps they were copied or left in Jerusalem to be sent by land courier later. Those notes would have been crucial for writing the gospel especially, as well as the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts.

We can be sure that Theophilus was acting in his own self-interests and not just for the benefit of Paul. Luke definitely appears to be writing *apologetically* (in defense of Christianity) and not just as a reporter of case history and legal facts. It is apparent that Theophilus had requested a full briefing on Christianity and the Church and Paul's activities (the clear undisputable documented facts). That sounds like something a court official or defense attorney would require. The apologetic tone of Acts, along with all the precedent-setting court cases that are mentioned there, suggests that it was written for the purpose of helping Paul in his defense before Caesar. The details of the voyage through the storm and the shipwreck, when Paul's prayers saved the lives of the Roman centurion and all the people onboard, must have been encouraging stuff for the Roman court officials to hear. The centurion who was in charge of bringing Paul to Rome would have been a powerful witness on behalf of Paul. That alone would have had a beneficial influence upon the outcome of Paul's trial. Luke says that he consulted at least two other gospel accounts that were already in existence (Matthew and Mark), and that he verified all this as accurate and reliable by talking to those who knew the facts. This is legal terminology, suggesting that it is structured as a defense of Christianity in general, and an apologetic for Paul particularly.

Paul did not have a defense attorney in Judea, since Acts shows that he defended himself in every hearing and trial during the two years he was held in custody in Caesarea. Nor is there any mention in the latter chapters of Acts of a defense attorney in Rome (unless, of course, Theophilus is that attorney). However, we know from Roman court records that it was common for Roman citizens who appealed to Caesar to have a defense attorney (advocate) working with them, and Theophilus could fit that scenario.

When we read back through both Luke and Acts, it will help us see which theory it supports. I re-read Acts four times, looking for clues regarding to whom it may have been written. My own analysis supports the idea that the gospel of Luke was researched (and his notes gathered) during Paul's two-year stay in Caesarea, but not written (or put into final form) until after Luke and Paul reached Rome.

After Paul was arrested, and realized he would be stuck in prison there in Caesarea for a while, he probably remembered what Jesus said to him when he was in prison in Jerusalem, i.e., that he would bear testimony in Rome (Acts 23:11). He had used his Roman citizenship to get out of sticky situations before, so he probably did it again, this time to get him to Rome to appear before Nero Caesar. He did not want to go back to Jerusalem, nor did he want to stay in prison in Caesarea. Sooner or later the Jews

would persuade Festus or Agrippa to bring him to Jerusalem to be tried (and killed). So sometime after Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea he began to consider his options. It would not have taken long for him to realize that he would have to appeal to Caesar to get safely out of Judea.

He also knew he would need a good defense to get him acquitted before Nero, so he would have needed Luke to write the *Acts* account in preparation for helping him defend his case in Rome. How early in the Caesarean imprisonment Luke began doing his research and preparation for writing the Gospel and the Acts is difficult to guess, but it was probably hastened along once Paul realized he would have to appeal to Caesar. The plot by 40 men to ambush and kill him would have been enough to make him start thinking about getting out of Judea, and his Roman citizenship would have come readily to mind, especially after Jesus appeared to him in jail there in Jerusalem in AD 58 and told him that he must testify for the gospel in Rome also (Acts 23:11). That would have given him the idea that he would have to testify in Roman court somehow. It would not have taken much imagination for him to see what Jesus was alluding to. All he had to do was wait for the appropriate moment to make the appeal to Caesar. That opportunity came in his hearing before Festus and Agrippa in AD 60.

Theophilus evidently requested a full account of the origin of Christianity and the history of Paul's activities leading up to his arrest. This points to two probabilities: (1) He must not have been a Jewish official in Jerusalem because all the gospel facts were well known in Judea, especially with Matthew's gospel readily available. A Judean official would not have needed the gospel account, nor the first nine chapters of Acts. (2) It seems more likely that he was a Gentile outside of Judea who was not familiar with Christianity, nor with the history of Paul. Luke seems to have written with a Roman Gentile audience in mind, knowing that what he wrote would be used as evidence in Paul's trial in Rome. But the biggest beneficiaries were the Gentile churches in the Diaspora and all future generations of the church afterwards. Just think how having these two books (Luke and Acts) has greatly expedited the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. Where would we be today without the historical record of the book of Acts? Incomparable, irreplaceable, and invaluable. It is utterly amazing to see how God's providence was at work all through the life of Paul to not only spread the gospel throughout the Roman world, but also to produce a bunch of epistles and writings for the benefit of all future generations. If we include Luke and Acts among all the literary productions connected with Apostle Paul, it means that 16 of the 27 New Testament books were directly connected with Apostle Paul (i.e., Paul's 14 epistles, plus Luke and Acts).

The solution to the identity of Theophilus will only be found by careful study of Luke and Acts, as well as the historical records of Rome. By analyzing both Luke and Acts we can certainly detect several things about the probable identity of Theophilus. Both the style and the contents of Luke is significantly different than Matthew and Mark, suggesting that Luke was writing with a certain audience in mind, apparently Gentiles, and more specifically Nero's court at Rome. The book of Acts is even more carefully crafted with the court of Nero clearly in the crosshairs, especially when we see a Roman Centurion (Cornelius) embracing Christianity without circumcision (Acts 10), the legal precedent of Gallio dismissing Paul's case in Corinth (Acts 18), as well as the lives of the Roman Centurion and all onboard the ship being saved by Paul's prayers (Acts 27-28). Gallio was the brother of Seneca, who was the boyhood tutor of Nero and now the chief advisor to Nero. This dismissal of Paul's case by Gallio would have carried a lot of weight in Nero's court, along with the document from the Roman commander Lysias in Caesarea. And there are many other things like that which are recorded in Acts which would have had a lot more impact in Nero's court than they would ever have had in a Jewish court in Judea.

Therefore, it seems to me that Theophilus was probably a Roman government official, acting on behalf of Nero's court, to discover whether there was any substantial case against Paul, and to inform Nero of the results of his investigation before the case went to trial.

Other Events that Occurred at this Time (AD61-62)

AD 61 – Height of Western Wall of Temple Raised – It was sometime during the procuratorship of Festus (AD 60-62), that the Jews raised the height of the western wall of the temple, so as to **block the view** of both the Romans and Agrippa II. The priests were not happy about Agrippa II who was able, from his newly constructed addition to his palace on the western heights, to spy on the priests as they went about their sacrificial duties in the temple. So, they built the western wall of the temple higher to block his view. Unfortunately, it also blocked the view of Festus and the Romans. Both Festus and Agrippa II ordered the wall lowered to its previous level, but the Jews appealed to Nero Caesar. They sent an envoy of ten leading men, along with the High Priest **Ishmael** and **Helcias** the

temple treasurer. Since Nero's wife, Poppaea, was sympathetic to the Jewish cause, she interceded on their behalf to Nero, who gave his permission for the wall to remain intact, however Ishmael and Helcias were detained in Rome by Poppaea as hostages. The other ten Jewish leaders were released to return to Judea [*Antiq.* 20:195 (20.8.11)].

This was a minor deal to Nero, but it set a precedent for bigger things to come. The Jews, encouraged by this benevolence of Poppaea, continued to take advantage of it, and were able to obtain several more concessions from Nero. The next year after this (AD 62), the young Josephus (26 years old) was sent to Rome to obtain the freedom of some priests who had been held hostage by Nero. Josephus was shipwrecked on the way to Rome (like Paul had been two years earlier) and met a Jewish stage actor (**Aliturius**) in Puteoli who had influence with Nero through Poppaea. Josephus used that connection to secure the freedom of the hostage priests, thus following the precedent set previously. Some have suggested that the Jews continued using this connection with Poppaea as much as possible. Others think that it was this very connection, or something similar, which enabled the Jews to suggest to Nero that he blame the fire in Rome on the Christians. That would have been a win-win for both Nero and the Jews. It got him off the hook for causing the Great Fire in Rome, and it eliminated the Christians from gaining any further influence in Rome. We will talk more about this when we get to AD 64.

AD 61 – Joseph Kabi or Kami (son of Simon) was appointed High Priest in place of Ishmael (son of Phabi) [*Antiq.* 20.195-196 (20.8.11)]. He was appointed by Agrippa II after Ishmael was detained by Poppaea in Rome as hostage. He ruled for about two years (AD 61-62). VanderKam says that he could be the son of "either of the two most recent Simons to hold the office, either Simon son of Camith (17-18 CE) or Simon Cantheras, son of Boethus (41-42 CE)" (*VanderKam* 475-476). Based on one of the variant forms of his surname (Kami), which is similar to Camith, it seems probable that he was the son of Simon b. Camith. Josephus does not tell us much more about him, except to note how he was replaced by the next high priest, Ananus b. Ananus in AD 62. [*Antiq*. 20.197 (20.9.1)] That change in high priests occurred in connection with the appointment of a new procurator (Albinus) to replace Festus who had died (AD 62). VanderKam thinks that this High Priest may be alluded to twice more in Josephus: "Our Joseph may reappear in *J. W.* 2.567 (2.20.4), where there is mention of a Joseph son of Simon who at the beginning of the revolt was sent as commander to Jericho. It is also likely that Josephus mentions him in *J. W.* 6.114 (6.2.2), where he refers to the 'chief priests [or high priests] Joseph and Jesus' who escaped from the doomed city of Jerusalem after Josephus himself made his impassioned speech to the inhabitants." (VanderKam 476)

AD 61 – A pestilence (plague) occurred in Turkey and Ephesus. This was another of those "birth pangs" or "signs" that the End of the Age was drawing near (Luke 21:11; cf. Matt. 24:7-8). It does not appear that John mentioned this in the book of Revelation, probably because it had already happened before he wrote.

AD 62 – Roman authorities in Judea ceased minting Torah-compliant coins (which had no human images on them), with the intent of eventually forcing the Jews to bring Roman coinage into the temple which had images of Nero and other Romans imprinted upon them. This violated the second commandment. The Jews were not allowed to mint their own coins that were Torah-compliant, so this meant that the supply of coinage that they had in the temple would be all they could keep in the temple treasury. Unfortunately this supply of coinage had a tendency to dwindle down as a result of the money-changers. Just four years after this (in AD 66) the Roman Procurator Florus tried to seize all the gold in the temple so that the Jews would no longer have any Torah-compliant gold coinage, and would therefore be forced to accept Roman coinage with human images on it. It was this very attempt by Florus which provoked the Jews to revolt. Josephus unofficially dates the beginning of the revolt from that attempt by Florus to get the gold (May 66).

AD 62 – Earthquakes and Famines. There was a severe **earthquake** in Campania which did a lot of damage to Pompeii, and a severe **famine** in Armenia and Palestine also.

AD 62 – **Ananias b. Nedebaeus was still very powerful** at this time. In spite of the fact that he was no longer High Priest, Ananias was still very wealthy and influential. VanderKam explains (pp. 458-459): "Ananias figures several times in later stories about the period after his high priesthood. Josephus

notes that he exercised great influence during the reign of **Albinus** (62-64) as procurator. He won the favor of the populace, so we learn, because of his wealth..." [he paid bribes to Albinus and the high priest, *Antiq*. 20.205-208 (20.9.2-3)]. One of his sons (**Eleazar b. Ananias**) who was the secretary of the Sagan (captain) of the temple guard, was kidnapped by the ***Sicarii*** and held for ransom. Ananias was so wealthy and powerful that he was able single-handedly to influence Albinus (the Roman Procurator) to release ten Sicarii prisoners in exchange for his son. Since this worked so well, the Sicarii pulled this trick several more times, kidnapping various members of Ananias' family and staff. The Sicarii preyed upon whichever government official had the most money and influence, especially if he was a moderate compromising with Rome. At this time (62-66), it appears that Ananias was that very kind of ruler [*Antiq*. 20.209-213 (20.9.3-4)]. Two of Ananias' sons (**Ananus** and **Eleazar**) served as Sagan of the temple guard at various times. Another son, **Simon**, was the leading spokesman for a delegation that appealed to Gessius Florus for help against the Zealot rebels in AD 66 [*War* 2.418 (2.17.4)]. Thus we see significant evidence that Ananias and his family were right up there at the top of the most wealthy and powerful of the ruling class in Judea just before the war began. Ananias had a lot of vested interest in keeping the peace with Rome. He was a moderate, and therefore a target of the Zealots who wanted no compromise with the Romans. It is not surprising then, that he was one of the first government officials killed by the Zealots right after the war began (Sept 66). The Zealot leader **Menahem** killed him soon after bringing his forces into Jerusalem, in fulfillment of Apostle Paul's prediction eight years earlier, "God is about to strike you, you white-washed wall" (Acts 23:3). And it is not without significance that **Eleazar**, the son of Ananias, was Sagan of the temple at that very time. We will have a lot more to say about this when we get to the events of AD 66.

Arrest of James and Some of His Companions (AD 62)

Apr 62 – Porcius Festus (procurator) died unexpectedly in early AD 62. The new governor (**Albinus**) would not arrive for another three months (July AD 62).

Apr 62 – Ananus II was appointed High Priest by Agrippa II, replacing Joseph Kami. The new governor (**Albinus**) would not arrive for another three months (July AD 62). Ananus II was appointed as High Priest by Agrippa II about the same time that Festus died, and immediately took advantage of the situation to persecute the Christians while there was no procurator to prevent him (see below). This Ananus II was the son of Ananus b. Seth, who had been High Priest fifty years earlier (AD 6-15). Note the year that Ananus b. Seth began his rule as High Priest (AD 6). This means that he would have been High Priest at the very time (AD 8) the twelve-year-old Jesus came to the Passover with His parents (Luke 2:41-52). Luke says that Jesus was "in the temple, sitting in the midst of **the teachers**, both listening to them and asking them questions. And **all who heard Him** were amazed at His understanding and answers" (Luke 2:46-47). It would have been very easy for Ananus b. Seth to have become acquainted with the young Jesus at this time. This may also explain why the Jewish leadership never seemed to question the qualifications and scholarly credentials of Jesus as a teacher and rabbi in Israel. They knew him well, and had heard him teach in the temple from an early age. Caiaphas (the son-in-law of Ananus b. Seth, and brother-in-law of Ananus II) was the sitting High Priest at the time of Jesus' arrest (AD 30). Both Ananus I and Caiaphas presided at the trial of Jesus. The Ananus family had a grudge against Jesus and His family (including James and Jude, and His cousins James and John), so it is no surprise to see the younger Ananus continue the persecution against the relatives of Jesus as soon as he had opportunity. This grudge was a rivalry for power. The Herodian rulers and the chief priestly families did not want a descendant of David to take the throne in Jerusalem. It would definitely cause trouble with Rome and cause the loss of their own powerful rule over Judea. They would not hesitate doing whatever was necessary to prevent that. That seems clear from the statements of Caiaphas in AD 30 (note the boldfaced words):

> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is **expedient for you** that one man die for the people, and that **the whole nation not perish**." [John 11:49-50 NAS95 boldface added]

Apr 62 – Ananus II arrested James and some of his companions: Right after being appointed as High Priest, **Ananus II** took advantage of the opportunity, at Passover in AD 62, to arrest "James and *some of his companions*" (Gk. *tinas heterous*, lit. "certain others") [*Antiq* 20:197-203 (20.9.1)]:

Antiq. 20:197 (20.9.1) And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator; but the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus.
Antiq. 20:198 (20.9.1) Now the report goes, that this elder Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons, who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests:
Antiq. 20:199 (20.9.1) but this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed;
Antiq. 20:200 (20.9.1) when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; **so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and certain others**, [or, some of his companions]; **and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned;**
Antiq. 20:201 (20.9.1) but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified;
Antiq. 20:202 (20.9.1) nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrin without his consent;
Antiq. 20:203 (20.9.1) whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

Here are some additional statements from F. F. Bruce (*Israel and the Nations*) and Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*) about the arrest and death of James:

F. F. Bruce:

> Festus died suddenly in office about the year 62, and a three months' interregnum ensued before his successor Albinus arrived. During this interregnum the high priest, Ananus II, seized the opportunity to pay off a number of old scores. He brought a number of men before the Sanhedrin and procured their condemnation to death. Among these the most notable person was James the Just, leader of the large Christian – or more accurately Nazarene – community in Jerusalem. This judicial murder shocked many of the Jerusalemites who were not themselves Nazarenes, for James' asceticism and piety had won him widespread veneration, and when Jerusalem was besieged a few years later there was not wanting those who declared that the disaster had befallen them because James' continual intercession for the city had been so violently cut short. (F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations*, p. 216)

Eusebius: (tells us more about the character of James)

> **2Euseb. 23:1** But after Paul, in consequence of his appeal to Caesar, had been sent to Rome by Festus, the Jews, being frustrated in their hope of entrapping him by the snares which they had laid for him, turned against **James, the brother of the Lord**, to whom the episcopal seat at Jerusalem had been entrusted by the apostles. The following daring measures were undertaken by them against him.
> **2Euseb. 23:2** Leading him into their midst they demanded of him that he should renounce faith in Christ in the presence of all the people. But, contrary to the opinion of all, with a clear voice, and with greater boldness than they had anticipated, he spoke out before the whole multitude and confessed that our Savior and Lord Jesus is the Son of God. But they were unable to bear longer the testimony of the man who, on account of the excellence of ascetic virtue and of piety which he exhibited in his life, was esteemed by all as the most just of men, and consequently they slew him. Opportunity for this deed of violence was furnished by the prevailing anarchy, which was caused by

the fact that Festus had died just at this time in Judea, and that the province was thus without a governor and head.
2Euseb. 23:3 The manner of James' death has been already indicated by the above-quoted words of Clement, who records that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club. But Hegesippus, who lived immediately after the apostles, gives the most accurate account in the fifth book of his Memoirs. He writes as follows:
2Euseb. 23:4 "James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Savior to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James.
2Euseb. 23:5 He was holy from his mother's womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath.
2Euseb. 23:6 He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woolen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people.
2Euseb. 23:7 Because of his exceeding great justice he was called the Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek, 'Bulwark of the people' and 'Justice,' in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him.
2Euseb. 23:8 Now some of the seven sects, which existed among the people and which have been mentioned by me in the Memoirs, asked him, 'What is the gate of Jesus?' and he replied that he was the Savior.
2Euseb. 23:9 On account of these words some believed that Jesus is the Christ. But the sects mentioned above did not believe either in a resurrection or in one's coming to give to every man according to his works. But as many as believed did so on account of James.
2Euseb. 23:10 Therefore when many even of the rulers believed, there was a commotion among the Jews and Scribes and Pharisees, who said that there was danger that the whole people would be looking for Jesus as the Christ. Coming therefore in a body to James they said, 'We entreat you, restrain the people; for they are gone astray in regard to Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat you to persuade all that have come to the feast of the Passover concerning Jesus; for we all have confidence in you. For we bear you witness, as do all the people, that you are just, and do not respect persons.
2Euseb. 23:11 Do therefore persuade the multitude not to be led astray concerning Jesus. For the whole people, and all of us also, have confidence in you. Stand therefore upon the pinnacle of the temple, that from that high position you may be clearly seen, and that your words may be readily heard by all the people. For all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, are come together on account of the Passover.'
2Euseb. 23:12 The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees therefore placed James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and cried out to him and said: 'You just one, in whom we ought all to have: confidence, forasmuch as the people are led, astray after Jesus, the crucified one, declare to us, what is the gate of Jesus.'
2Euseb. 23:13 And he answered with a loud voice, 'Why do ye ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He himself sits in heaven at the right hand of the great Power, and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven.'
2Euseb. 23:14 And when many were fully convinced and gloried in the testimony of James, and said, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' these same Scribes and Pharisees said again to one another, 'We have done badly in supplying such testimony to Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, in order that they may be afraid to believe him.'
2Euseb. 23:15 And they cried out, saying, 'Oh! Oh! The just man is also in error.' And they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah,' Let us take away the just man, because he is troublesome to us: therefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings.'
2Euseb. 23:16 So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to each other, 'Let us stone James the Just.' And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned and knelt down and said, 'I entreat you, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

2Euseb. 23:17 And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of the Rechabites, who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, saying, 'Cease, what do ye? The just one prays for you.'
2Euseb. 23:18 And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man on the head. And thus he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot, by the temple, and his monument still remains by the temple. He became a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ. And immediately Vespasian besieged them."
2Euseb. 23:19 These things are related at length by Hegesippus, who is in agreement with Clement. James was so admirable a man and so celebrated among all for his justice, that the more sensible even of the Jews were of the opinion that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem, which happened to them immediately after his martyrdom for no other reason than their daring act against him.
2Euseb. 23:20 Josephus, at least, has not hesitated to testify this in his writings, where he says, "These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus, that is called the Christ. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man."
2Euseb. 23:21 And the same writer records his death also in the twentieth book of his Antiquities in the following words: "But the emperor, when he learned of the death of Festus, sent Albinus to be procurator of Judea. But the younger Ananus, who, as we have already said, had obtained the high priesthood, was of an exceedingly bold and reckless disposition. He belonged, moreover, to the sect of the Sadducees, who are the most cruel of all the Jews in the execution of judgment, as we have already shown.
2Euseb. 23:22 Ananus, therefore, being of this character, and supposing that he had a favorable opportunity on account of the fact that Festus was dead, and Albinus was still on the way, called together the Sanhedrin, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, James by name, together with some others, and accused them of violating the law, and condemned them to be stoned.
2Euseb. 23:23 But those in the city who seemed most moderate and skilled in the law were very angry at this, and sent secretly to the king, requesting him to order Ananus to cease such proceedings. For he had not done right even this first time. And certain of them also went to meet Albinus, who was journeying from Alexandria, and reminded him that it was not lawful for Ananus to summon the Sanhedrim without his knowledge.
2Euseb. 23:24 And Albinus ... wrote in anger to **Ananus**, threatening him with punishment. And the king, Agrippa, in consequence, deprived him, of the high priesthood, which he had held three months, and appointed Jesus, the son of Damnaeus." These things are recorded in regard to **James**, who is said to be the author of the first of the so-called catholic epistles.
2Euseb. 23:25 But it is to be observed that it is disputed; at least, not many of the ancients have mentioned it, as is the case likewise with the epistle that bears the name of Jude, which is also one of the seven so-called catholic epistles. Nevertheless we know that these also, with the rest, have been read publicly in very many churches.

This **James** was **the brother of Jesus**, who according to tradition, was the overseer of the "law-zealous" Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (who morphed into the Unitarian Judaizing sects of Ebionites and Nazaraeans after AD 70). But who were those other companions of James (the "certain others") who were arrested at the same time? Peter was not one of them, since we find him over a year later writing his two epistles from Jerusalem. **John** was most likely in Jerusalem at this time, so he could have been one of them. There is something else about **John**, which makes him a likely target of Ananus II. John was known to the family of Ananus I (John 18:15), and John was a blood relative of Jesus, since his mother, **Salome**, was a sister of Jesus' mother Mary (compare Matt 20:20 with Mk 15:40; Matt 27:56; and Mk 16:1). So if Ananus II attempted to round up all the relatives of Jesus, John would have been a prime target, since he was not only one of the three leading apostles of Jesus, but also part of the extended family of Jesus (a first cousin), and was already "known" to the family of Ananus. When Josephus says "James and some of his companions" (lit. "certain others"), it could easily be talking about his family, and not just his fellow apostles and Christian associates. This means that **Apostle John** was very likely one of those "companions" of James who was arrested by Ananus II here at Passover in AD 62. If so, this would explain how and when John was **sent to exile** on the island of **Patmos**. We discuss that more under the heading of the Exile of John to Patmos below.

Josephus says there was more than one "companion" arrested. Who were the others, besides John? One possible explanation might be found in the story about **Jude's grandsons**. These two grandsons of Jude were of the extended family of Jesus, just like James and John were. Since the powerful high priestly families (Ananus b. Seth, Boethus, Ananias b. Nedebaeus, et al) knew that Jesus was a direct descendant of King David, and therefore had a legitimate claim to the Davidic throne, it would have been their desire to rid themselves of the whole family of Jesus, including all his brothers (James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude), including their sons and grandsons, just like Herod the Great had tried to do a generation earlier. The words "certain others" could be a reference to family relatives, and not merely friends, disciples, or associates. There is a lengthy discussion of this incident involving the grandsons of Jude below. This may not have been the exact occasion when those grandsons were arrested, but it must have occurred somewhere during the four year timeframe (AD 62-66) before the war began, and this occasion when their grand-uncle James was arrested would have been a convenient time.

It is no surprise to see Ananus II following the same pattern of deadly opposition to Jesus and the Christians that his father (Ananus I) and brother-in-law (Caiaphas) had begun 32 years earlier. Ananus I was the only family of High Priests that could boast of having eight High Priests come from his dynasty: Ananus, five sons, one son-in-law, and one grandson [See F. F. Bruce's list of High Priests in the back of his book, *Israel and the Nations*, as well as Jos. *Antiq.* 20.197-203 (20.9.1); see also Jos. *Antiq.* 18:26, 34 (18.2.1-2), and *War* 4.318-325 (4.5.2)].

Ananus II was a Sadducee [*Antiq.* 20:199 (20.9.1)], but this does not guarantee that his father, brothers, or any of his other relations were Sadducees (*VanderKam* 478). Less than six years later (Feb. 68), **Ananus II**, along with another former High Priest **Jesus b. Gamaliel,** were violently killed by the Idumeans inside the city of Jerusalem, at the very time when Jesus was present in the unseen realm above judging the twelve tribes and pouring out His wrath upon the rebellious Jews who had killed Him and persecuted His followers. Josephus lamented the death of Ananus as a fatal blow to his hope for a quick and far less destructive end to the conflict. **Ananus II** was a moderate who wanted to stop the revolt and restore peace with Rome, and was the main leader of the moderates within the city. Josephus praised him for this moderate political stance, and said that if Ananus had not been killed, he might have been able to influence the Zealots to stop the madness and save the temple from destruction [*War* 4.310-325 (4.5.2)]. We might also note here that at the time the war started in AD 66, the son of Ananus II's brother Theophilus, i.e., his nephew, was High Priest (**Matthias** b. Theophilus b. Ananus, appointed by Agrippa II in AD 64 just about the time of the Neronic persecution and before the war broke out). This gave Ananus II a lot more influence than he would otherwise have had as a former High Priest. Evidently Matthias continued as High Priest even after the war broke out, and onwards for at least the first two years of the war.

It is extremely intriguing that Josephus has so much good to say about Ananus II, especially since Josephus was in the city of Jerusalem at the time Ananus II took this action against James and his companions. About six months after the death of James, Josephus went to Rome ostensibly to free some priests who had been held hostage there, but it is probable that he had several different missions to accomplish while he was there (especially since he stayed in Rome for almost four years). After his shipwreck in the Winter of AD 62, Josephus remained in Rome from the Spring of 63 until the Summer of 66. He was still in Rome at the time of the great fire (July 64) and afterwards while the Neronic persecution raged against the Christians (Summer and Fall of 64). It is extremely strange that Josephus does not mention either the fire or the persecution, even though he certainly knew about it and witnessed it firsthand. We know Josephus liked Ananus II (who hated Christians), but we do not know if there was any significant connections between them in this earlier period (AD 62) before Josephus went to Rome. Paul was in prison in Rome at the very time Josephus was sent there. We do not know whether the mission of Josephus to Rome had any connections with Paul's situation. If so, then it means that Josephus, who was a Pharisee, was doing favors for two of the Sadducean High Priests (Ananias b. Nedebaeus and Ananus II) against a Pharisee Christian (Paul).

When Ananus II illegally arrested and killed James and some of his companions, many of the influential folks in Jerusalem were upset by this abuse of power, and complained to Agrippa II, who immediately deposed Ananus II after only three months in office. He was replaced by **Jesus (son of Damnaeus)**.

History of the Christian Church **(Philip Schaff's article on James the Brother of the Lord):**

Next to Peter, who was the oecumenical leader of Jewish Christianity, stands JAMES, THE BROTHER, OF THE LORD (also called by post-apostolic writers “James the Just,” and “Bishop of Jerusalem”), as the local head of the oldest church and the leader of the most conservative portion of Jewish Christianity. He seems to have taken the place of James the son of Zebedee, after his martyrdom, A.D. 44. He became, with Peter and John, one of the three “pillars” of the church of the circumcision (Gal 2:9). And after the departure of Peter from Jerusalem James presided over the mother church of Christendom until his death. Though not one of the Twelve, he enjoyed, owing to his relationship to our Lord and his commanding piety, almost apostolic authority, especially in Judaea and among the Jewish converts. On one occasion even Peter yielded to his influence or that of his representatives, and was misled into his uncharitable conduct towards the Gentile brethren (Gal 2:12).

James was not a believer before the resurrection of our Lord. He was the oldest of the four “brethren” (James, Joseph, Judas, Simon), of whom John reports with touching sadness: “Even his brethren did not believe in him” (Mk 6:3; Matt 13:55; Jn 7:5). It was one of the early and constant trials of our Lord in the days of his [earthly ministry] that he was without honor among his fellow-townsmen, yea, “among his own kin, and in his own house” (Mk 6:4; Matt 13:57; Lk 4:24; Jn 4:44). James was no doubt imbued with the temporal and carnal Messianic misconceptions of the Jews, and impatient at the delay and unworldliness of his divine brother. Hence the taunting and almost disrespectful language: “Depart hence and go into Judaea .... If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world” (John 7:3-5). The crucifixion could only deepen his doubt and sadness.

But a special personal appearance of the risen Lord brought about his conversion, as also that of his brothers, who after the resurrection appear in the company of the apostles (Acts 1:13; cf. 1 Cor 9:5). This turning-point in his life is briefly but significantly alluded to by Paul, who himself was converted by a personal appearance of Christ (1 Cor 15:7). It is more fully reported in an interesting fragment of the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* [one of the oldest and least fabulous of the apocryphal Gospels – The fragment is preserved by Jerome, *De vir. ill.* cap. 2. Comp. Hilgenfeld, *Nov. Test. extra can. rec.* IV. 17 and 29; and Nicholson, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews* (1879), pp. 63 sqq.], which shows the sincerity and earnestness of James even before his conversion. He had sworn, we are here told, “that he would not eat bread from that hour wherein the Lord had drunk the cup [of his passion] until he should see him rising from the dead.” The Lord appeared to him and communed with him, giving bread to James the Just and saying: “My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from them that sleep” [See Lightfoot, *Ep. to the Gal.,* p. 266].

In the *Acts* and in the Epistle to the *Galatians*, James appears as the most conservative of the Jewish converts, at the head of the extreme right wing; yet recognizing Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles, giving him the right hand of fellowship, as Paul himself reports, and unwilling to impose upon the Gentile Christians the yoke of circumcision. He must therefore not be identified with the heretical Judaizers (the forerunners of the Ebionites), who hated and opposed Paul, and made circumcision a condition of justification and church membership. He presided at the Council of Jerusalem and proposed the compromise which saved a split in the church. He probably prepared the synodical letter which agrees with his style and has the same greeting formula peculiar to him (cf. Acts 15:23; Jas 1:1).

He was an honest, conscientious, eminently practical, conciliatory Jewish Christian saint, the right man in the right place and at the right time, although contracted in his mental vision as in his local sphere of labor. From an incidental remark of Paul we may infer that James, like Peter and the other brothers of the Lord, was married (1 Cor 9:5).

The mission of James was evidently to stand in the breach between the synagogue and the church, and to lead the disciples of Moses gently to Christ. He was the right man to do it at that critical time just before the End. As long as there was any hope of a conversion of the Jews as a nation, he prayed for it and made the transition as easy as possible. When that hope vanished his mission was fulfilled.

According to *Josephus* he was, at the instigation of the younger Ananus, the high priest, of the sect of the Sadducees, whom he calls “the most unmerciful of all the Jews in the execution of judgment,” stoned to death with some others, as “breakers of the law,” i.e. Christians, in the interval between the procuratorship of Festus and that of Albinus, that is, in the year [AD 62]. The Jewish historian adds that this act of injustice created great indignation among those most devoted to the law (the Pharisees), and that they induced Albinus and King Agrippa to depose Ananus II (a son of the Ananus (or Annas) mentioned in Luke 3:2; John 18:13). He thus furnishes an impartial testimony to the high standing of James even among the Jews [*Ant*. 20.200 (20.9.1)].

Hegesippus, a Jewish Christian historian about AD 170, puts the martyrdom a few years later, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 69). [Neander, Ewald, and Renan give preference to the date of Josephus [i.e., AD 62]. But according to the pseudo-Clementine literature James survived Peter.] He relates that James was first thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple by the Jews and then stoned [or clubbed] to death. His last prayer was an echo of that of his brother and Lord on the cross: "God, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The dramatic account of James by Hegesippus is an overdrawn picture from the middle of the second century, colored by Judaizing traits which may have been derived from the "Ascents of James" and other apocryphal sources. He turns James into a Jewish priest and Nazirite saint (comp. his advice to Paul, Acts 21:23, 24), who drank no wine, ate no flesh, never shaved, nor took a bath, and wore only linen. But the biblical James is Pharisaic and legalistic rather than Essenic and ascetic. In the pseudo-Clementine writings, he is raised even above Peter as the head of the holy church of the Hebrews, as "the lord and bishop of bishops," as "the prince of priests." According to tradition, mentioned by *Epiphanius*, James, like St. John at Ephesus, wore the high-priestly petalon, or golden plate on the forehead, with the inscription: "Holiness to the Lord" (Ex. 28:36). And in the Liturgy of St. James, the brother of Jesus is raised to the dignity of "the brother of the very God" (adelphotheos). Legends gather around the memory of great men, and reveal the deep impression they made upon their friends and followers. The character which shines through these James-legends is that of a loyal, zealous, devout, consistent Hebrew Christian, who by his personal purity and holiness secured the reverence and affection of all around him.

But we must carefully distinguish between the **Jewish-Christian**, yet orthodox, overestimate of James in the **Eastern church**, as we find it in the fragments of Hegesippus and in the Liturgy of St. James, [versus] the heretical perversion of James into an enemy of Paul and the gospel of freedom, as he appears in apocryphal fictions. We have here the same phenomenon as in the case of Peter and Paul. Every leading apostle has his apocryphal shadow and caricature both in the primitive church and in the modern critical reconstruction of its history. **The name and authority of James was abused by the Judaizing party in undermining the work of Paul**, notwithstanding the fraternal agreement of the two at Jerusalem (Gal 2:9-12; Acts 15). The **Ebionites** in the second century continued this malignant assault upon the memory of Paul under cover of the honored names of James and Peter; while a certain class of modern critics (though usually from the opposite ultra- or pseudo-Pauline point of view) endeavor to prove the same antagonism from the Epistle of James (as far as they admit it to be genuine at all).

The Epistle in our canon, which purports to be written by "James, a bond-servant of God and of Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of the dispersion," though not generally acknowledged at the time of Eusebius and Jerome, has strong internal evidence of genuineness. It precisely suits the character and position of the historical James as we know him from Paul and the Acts, and **differs widely from the apocryphal James of the Ebionite fictions** [Ewald (vi. 608) remarks that it is just such a letter as we may expect from the centre of Christianity in that period, when **most Christians were poor and oppressed by rich Jews**]. It hails undoubtedly from Jerusalem, the theocratic metropolis, amid the scenery of Palestine. The Christian communities appear not as churches, but as **synagogues**, **consisting mostly of poor people**, oppressed and persecuted by the rich and powerful Jews. There is no trace of Gentile Christians or of any controversy between them and the Jewish Christians. **The Epistle was perhaps a companion to the original Gospel of Matthew for the Hebrews, as the first Epistle of John was such a companion to his Gospel.** It is probably the oldest of the epistles of the New Testament. It represents, at all events, the earliest and meagerest, yet an eminently practical and necessary type of Christianity, with prophetic earnestness, proverbial sententiousness, great freshness, and in fine Greek. It is not dogmatic but ethical. It has a strong resemblance to the addresses of John the Baptist and the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and also to the book of *Ecclesiasticus* and the *Wisdom of Solomon*. It never attacks the Jews directly, but still less St. Paul, at least not his genuine doctrine. It characteristically calls the gospel the "perfect law of liberty," [Jas 1:25] thus connecting it very closely with the Mosaic dispensation, yet raising it by implication far above the imperfect law of bondage. The author has very little to say about Christ and the deeper mysteries of redemption, but evidently presupposes a knowledge of the gospel history, and reverently calls Christ "the Lord of glory," and himself humbly his "bond-servant" (Jas 1:1; 2:1). He represents religion throughout in its practical aspect as an exhibition of faith by good works. **He undoubtedly differs widely from Paul, yet does not contradict, but supplements him**, and fills an important place in the

Christian system of truth which comprehends all types of genuine piety. There are multitudes of sincere, earnest, and faithful Christian workers who never rise above the level of James to the sublime heights of Paul or John. The Christian church would never have given to the Epistle of James a place in the canon if she had felt that it was irreconcilable with the doctrine of Paul. Even the Lutheran church did not follow her great leader in his unfavorable judgment, but still retains James among the canonical books.

After the martyrdom of James he was succeeded by **Symeon [Simon, Simeon], a son of Clopas and a cousin of Jesus (and of James).** He continued to guide the church at Jerusalem till the reign of Trajan, when he died a martyr at the great age of a hundred and twenty years [Hegesippus apud Euseb. *H. E.* III., 11, 22, 32; IV., 5, 22. *Const. Apost.* VII. 46. Hegesippus assumes that Clopas, the father of Symeon [Simon, Simeon], was a brother of Joseph and an uncle of Jesus. He never calls Symeon "brother of the Lord," but only James and Jude (II. 23; III. 20).]. The next thirteen bishops of Jerusalem, who came, however, in rapid succession, were likewise of Jewish descent.

Throughout this period the church of Jerusalem preserved its strongly Israelitish type, but joined with it "the genuine knowledge of Christ," and stood in communion with the Catholic church, from which the **Ebionites**, as heretical Jewish Christians, were excluded. After the line of the fifteen circumcised bishops had run out, and Jerusalem was a second time laid waste under Hadrian, the mass of the Jewish Christians gradually **merged in the orthodox Greek Church**.

For more info about James see: Josephus: *Ant*. XX. 9, 1. — Hegesippus in Euseb. *Hist. Ecc*. II. ch. 23. — JEROME: *Catal*. vir. ill. c. 2, under "Jacobus." EPIPHANIUS, *Haer*. XXIX. 4; XXX. 16; LXXVIII. 13 sq. Apocryphal: *Protoevangelium Jacobi*, ed. in Greek by Tischendorf, in "Evangelia Apocrypha," pp. 1–49, comp. the Prolegg. pp. xii-xxv. James is honorably mentioned in several other apocryphal Gospels. — Epiphanius, *Haer*. XXX. 16, alludes to an **Ebionite and strongly anti-Pauline book**, the *Ascents of James* (Anabathmoi Iakobou), descriptions of his **ascension to heaven**, which are lost. — *The Liturgy of James*, ed. by W. Trollope, Edinb. 1848. Composed in the third century, after the Council of Nicaea (as it contains the terms *homoousios* and *theotokos*), but resting on some older traditions. It was intended for the church of Jerusalem, which is styled "the mother of all churches." It is still used once a year on the festival of St. James, Oct. 23, in the Greek Church at Jerusalem.

Jude's Grandsons Arrested (AD 62)

Apr 62 – Jude's two grandsons were supposedly arrested and interrogated by "Domitian" some time after AD 70 (according to futurists). Since those two grandsons said that the return of Christ was still future, the futurists use this story to negate the preterist view. And we need to note here that they use it against ALL preterists, not just against the rapture preterists. Their argument runs something like this: Since these grandsons appeared before Domitian (AD 81-96) at least a decade or more AFTER AD 70, and said that Christ's return was still future, that means that the second coming did not occur in AD 70 after all. First, we need to read this story about Jude's Grandsons straight out of Eusebius, to see how it was actually reported by him. Then we will analyze it:

THE STORY:

3Euseb. 17:1 **Domitian** [Gk. dometianos], having shown great cruelty toward many, and having unjustly put to death no small number of well-born and notable men at Rome, and having without cause exiled and confiscated the property of a great many other illustrious men, finally became a **successor of Nero** [Gk. neronos] in his hatred and enmity toward God. He was in fact **the second that stirred up a persecution against us**, although his father Vespasian had undertaken nothing prejudicial to us.

3Euseb. 18:1 ¶ It is said that in this persecution **the apostle and evangelist John**, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine word.

3Euseb. 18:2 **Irenaeus**, in the fifth book of his work *Against Heresies*, where he discusses the number of the name of Antichrist which is given in the so-called **Apocalypse of John**, speaks as follows concerning him:

3Euseb. 18:3 "If it were necessary for his name to be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the revelation. For [he or it] was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of **Domitian** [Gk. dometianou]."
3Euseb. 18:4 To such a degree, indeed, did the teaching of our faith flourish at that time that even those writers who were far from our religion did not hesitate to mention in their histories the persecution and the martyrdoms which took place during it.
3Euseb. 18:5 And they, indeed, accurately indicated the time. For they recorded that in **the fifteenth year of Domitian** [Gk. dometianou], Flavia Domitilla, daughter of a sister of Flavius Clement, who at that time was one of the consuls of Rome, was exiled with many others to the island of Pontia in consequence of testimony borne to Christ.
3Euseb. 19:1 ¶ But when this same **Domitian** [Gk. dometianou] had commanded that the descendants of David should be slain, an ancient tradition says that some of the heretics brought accusation against the **descendants** [Gk. *apogonos*, male offspring] **of Jude** (said to have been a brother of the Savior according to the flesh), on the ground that they were of the lineage of David and were related to Christ himself. **Hegesippus** relates these facts in the following words.
3Euseb. 20:1 ¶ "Of the family of the Lord there were still living the **grandsons** [Gk. uionos] **of Jude**, who is said to have been the Lord's brother according to the flesh. Information was given that they belonged to the family of David, and they were brought to the **Emperor Domitian** [Gk. dometianon kaisara] by the Evocatus. For he **[Domitian]** feared the **Parousia** of Christ as Herod also had feared it.

Note this connection between Domitian and Herod – this points to some emperor before AD 70 when the fear of the Parousia would have been much greater, as we see with Felix in the book of Acts 24:25. Fear of the Parousia or of an uprising by a Jewish messianic contender would not have been significant after the fortresses of Judea had been demolished and all the resistance put to death. This clearly points to a time before the war under **Nero Domitius** [Gk DOMETION in *Antiq*. 20.149 (20.8.1)], and not under the **Flavian Domitian** [Gk DOMETIANOS in *Life* 429 (76); *War* 7.85-88 (7.4.2); *War* 7.152 (7.5.5)]. Notice the difference in spelling of the two names in the Greek. Here is the story of Jude's grandsons in Eusebius:

3Euseb. 20:2 And he asked them if they were descendants of David, and they confessed that they were. Then he asked them how much property they had, or how much money they owned. And both of them answered that they had only nine thousand denarii, half of which belonged to each of them; and this property did not consist of silver, but of a piece of land which contained only thirty-nine acres, and from which they raised their taxes and supported themselves by their own labor."
3Euseb. 20:3 Then they showed their hands, exhibiting the hardness of their bodies and the callousness produced upon their hands by continuous toil as evidence of their own labor.
3Euseb. 20:4 And when **they were asked concerning Christ and his kingdom, of what sort it was and where and when it was to appear**, they answered that it was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly and angelic one, which would **appear at the consummation of the age** [Gk. *sunteleia tou aionos*], when he should come in glory to judge the living and the dead, and to give to every one according to his works.
3Euseb. 20:5 Upon hearing this, **Domitian** [Gk. *Dometianon*] did not pass judgment against them, but, despising them as of no account, he let them go, and by a decree put a stop to the persecution of the Church.
3Euseb. 20:6 But when they were released they **ruled the churches** because they were **witnesses** and were also **relatives of the Lord**. And peace being established, they lived until the time of Trajan."
3Euseb. 20:7 These things are related by **Hegesippus**. **Tertullian** also has mentioned **Domitian** [Gk. dometianou] in the following words: "**Domitian** [Gk. *Dometianos*] also, who possessed a share of Nero's cruelty, attempted once to do the same thing that the latter did. But because he had, I suppose, some intelligence, he very soon ceased, and even recalled those whom he had banished."
3Euseb. 20:8 But after **Domitian** [Gk. *Dometianon*] had reigned fifteen years, and Nerva had succeeded to the empire, the Roman Senate, according to the writers that record the history of those days, voted that **Domitian's** [Gk. *Dometianou*] honors should be cancelled, and that those

who had been unjustly banished should return to their homes and have their property restored to them.

3Euseb. 20:9 It was at this time that the apostle John returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode at Ephesus, **according to an ancient Christian tradition**.

About this story: from Edgar J. Goodspeed, *A History of Early Christian Literature*:

It is from Hegesippus that Eusebius and others learned about the grandsons of Jude. Hegesippus supposedly recorded this incident in his *Memoirs*, which Eusebius refers to (*Church History* iii.20.1-8). Of course, the Memoirs are lost, and Eusebius only preserves a small clipping of the story:

"...[of] much interest is [Hegesippus'] story of Domitian and the grandsons of Jesus' brother Jude. He says that the emperor was seeking out any descendants of David, as possible leaders of insurrection, and his agent found two grandsons of Jude who were farmers, cultivating a little farm of thirty-nine acres, worth about fifteen to seventeen hundred dollars. They showed their toil-worn hands, and were so manifestly inoffensive peasants that the emperor let them go (*Church History* iii.20.1-8)." (Goodspeed, p. 181)

"But Philip of Side [early 5th cent.] made use of his work in his *Christian History*, written about AD 430 but now for the most part lost. Philip said that Hegesippus gave the names of Jesus' relatives who were called before Domitian as **Zoker** and **Jacob**." (Goodspeed, pp. 181-182)

THE PROBLEM WITH THIS STORY:

According to Eusebius, this story happened more than a decade after AD 70, during the reign of Domitian Caesar (son of Vespasian). Our futurist critics are quick to point out that these two grandsons of Jude, who were obviously Christians at the time of this incident, and very much aware of the **NATURE** of fulfillment for the endtime events, but also totally unaware of the past **TIME** of its fulfillment. Our futurist critics jab us with this dilemma constantly. A couple of examples are Ken Gentry and Charles Hill. Our futurist critics have rammed this down our throats on numerous occasions. And we need to note here that they use it against ALL preterists, not just the rapture preterists. For instance, here is how one futurist critic said it:

Eusebius Pamphilus relates information given by Hegesippus about the Lord's relatives. The interesting part concerns them answering Domitian concerning the Kingdom and Christ's coming. These guys would have either lived through AD70 or been closely connected to those who did. They would have had close ties to the apostolic teaching concerning the second coming. What is the preterist argument concerning such an early witness to Christ's still future coming post AD 70? [*Doug Shuffield* - found on the Preterist Archive website]

So, how do we Preterists handle this story? Notice that the grandsons were not aware of the fulfillment of these things at AD 70. Why hadn't Jude told them? Didn't Jude know about the return of his brother (Jesus) in AD 70? Why didn't he pass that info along to his son and grandsons? In view of his inspired status as a true Christian and writer of one of the books of our NT, it seems pretty safe to assume that Jude would have known that Christ returned in AD 70 if he lived until that event. Assuming that his son and grandsons were TRUE Christians at the time of the Parousia, they would have known that the Parousia occurred, just by their association with Jude and the family of Jesus.

However, there are lots of uncertainties involved in this story. For instance, we do not know for sure that the grandsons were Christians before the Parousia, nor whether Jude himself survived until (and after) the Parousia.

Since Jude was definitely a true Christian at the time of writing his book (AD 64), he would either have been raptured at the Parousia, or killed in the Neronic persecution before the Parousia like Paul, John, Peter, and James his brother (AD 62-64). If he was killed in the Neronic persecution, then his family might have fled the country when the Judean Christians fled to Pella. However, we don't know whether his son and grandsons were true Christians at that time or not. Nor do we know when the grandsons were born. If the son of Jude was still alive and was a true Christian at the time of the Parousia, then he was raptured along with Jude, and the grandsons would have already been born before their father died. And if their father was a Christian, the grandsons would also most likely be Christians. The problem is, we simply do not know which, if any, of these scenarios are correct, or whether the solution lies somewhere else.

This is a problem for all preterists. We have the burden of explaining how Jude's grandsons, who seem to be Christians, could have been so ignorant about the past occurrence of the Parousia (and all of its related events) at AD 70. If they or their parents were alive and were true Christians at the time of the Parousia, they would have KNOWN that the Parousia occurred. The NT writers are too specific about what the true Christians could EXPECT to see and experience at the Parousia. **There is no wiggle room here for Preterists to say that the true Christians either missed the significance of AD 70, or simply went on their merry way and never mentioned it again (not even to their children and grandchildren). That approach brings a reproach upon the honesty, dignity and credibility of any of the apostles and pre-70 saints who lived beyond AD 70.**

If they were true Christians at the time of the Parousia, and were still around after witnessing and experiencing these momentous events, they would have said something to indicate that these big three events had already occurred. They would have spoken up when Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius started saying that the Parousia was still future. They would have set the record straight. Not to do so would have been unethical negligence, and would have discredited them as false witnesses for Christ. No matter where we date this story, the grandsons of Jude do seem to be totally ignorant of the occurrence of the Parousia. How can we explain this ignorance? The futurists use this ignorance to prove that the Parousia did not occur, but preterists do not have that option. So how do we preterists explain their ignorance of the Parousia?

TWO POSSIBLE PRETERIST SOLUTIONS:

1. Jude's grandsons were not Christians at the time of the Parousia, and simply did not know that the Parousia had occurred, nor what had happened to any of their family members who were Christians. They would have assumed that their Christian friends and family had all been killed in the Neronic persecution or the Jewish War. Then, sometime after the war, the grandsons would have become Christians, being totally unaware that the Parousia had already occurred. Although some preterists might like this explanation, it is unacceptable to futurists and other preterists.
2. This story about Jude's grandsons belongs to the period before the War (AD 62-66) when the Romans and Jews were both persecuting Christians like this. It is a case of *misplaced history*. It is this particular option that I will follow in my explanation. And it is the approach which all preterists will have to take in order to consistently and convincingly explain the ignorance of the grandsons about the past Parousia. *In other words, they did not know about the occurrence of the Parousia because it had not happened yet.*

I believe this whole story about the grandsons of Jude has been historically misplaced in the same way the story about John seeing the Apocalypse in the reign of "Domitian" was misunderstood by Irenaeus and his sources. Irenaeus did not realize that his sources were referring to *Nero Domitius* instead of *Flavius Domitian*. This story comes from a mid-to-late second century writer (Hegesippus) who may not have had his facts straight. Therefore, not much credence can be given to its accuracy. It is not confirmed "at the mouth of two or more reliable first century eyewitnesses" and cannot be checked and verified. Hegesippus may very well have misread his sources, seeing **Domitius** (Nero) and thinking that it was **Domitian** (Flavian). Or his sources may have been confused about which Domitian was under consideration here. That possibility alone questions the value of this story.

Eusebius doubted the genuineness of Revelation because of this kind of blunder by Irenaeus and his sources (Papias and Hegesippus). According to this theory Papias and Hegesippus did not realize that the reference to *Domitian* by some of their sources was a reference to *Nero Domitius*, and therefore mistakenly thought it was referring to the Flavian emperor *Domitian*. Plus there was another mistake in regard to two different men with the name "John" (the Apostle versus the Elder). [cf. *Apostolic Fathers*, Michael W. Holmes, Baker Books: *Papias* 3:4-5; 5:2; 7:3]. These two historical blunders have wreaked havoc on all attempts to:

- Date the book of Revelation,
- Know who its real author was,
- See it as inspired and canonical,
- Pinpoint the real persecution under which it was written, and
- Reconstruct consistently the history surrounding the writing of the book and the latter years of John's life and martyrdom.

Foy Wallace, Milton S. Terry, Ken Gentry, and several other careful and reputable scholars of the past two hundred years have staunchly defended the notion that either the sources of Irenaeus (Papias and Hegesippus) were inaccurate and mistaken, or that Irenaeus himself misread and misunderstood those sources, or both, thus rendering his statements worthless as evidence for a late date. See especially the treatment of this in Foy Wallace (*Revelation*, pages 21-28), and Ken Gentry (*Before Jerusalem Fell*, 1998 revised edition, pages 45-67).

I suspect that something like this controversy over the two different Domitians is also involved here in the tradition about the grandsons of Jude. What if it was Nero "Domitius" (not the Flavian "Domitian") who ordered the grandsons of Jude to be interrogated by his Roman representative in Palestine (i.e., either the Procurator in Caesarea, or the Legate in Antioch)? This very kind of mistaken identity (i.e., substituting "Domitian" for "Domitius") appears to have occurred in regard to the persecution under which John wrote the Apocalypse. It would be easy to see that same thing happening here in regard to the identity of the emperor under whose authority the grandsons were arrested and interrogated, especially since *Eusebius* is using the same corrupt sources (Papias, Hegesippus, and Irenaeus) for both stories, and both stories are in the same context, one right after the other in Eusebius.

Since Nero's name was very similar to Domitian (i.e., Domitius), it is quite possible that Nero is the one who actually ordered this roundup of all the descendants of King David. It apparently was done in Judea, since there was no mention of them being carried to Rome to meet with the emperor there. It happened **before the war** broke out, since it would not have been possible for Jude's grandsons to be owning and farming their own land and paying their taxes after the war started, nor after the war was over. This means that they would have been brought before Caesar's tribunal, either the Procurator in Caesarea (Festus, Albinus or Florus), or the Roman Legate in Antioch [Corbulo (AD 59-63) or Cestius Gallus (AD 63-67)]. [See the online *Jewish Encyclopedia* entry for "Gallus, Caius Cestius", and the article on Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo at www.Livius.org]

Church historians are skeptical about any such roundup action in Domitian's reign, since the Jews had been so utterly crushed by Titus that there would have been no possibility for any Zealot rebellions by a Davidic leader during Domitian's reign. Plus there were very few Jewish people left in the land after AD 70. Nor could they have owned any land and farmed it. The Romans owned all the land in Palestine after the war. The Christians had all fled the country before the war, and there is no clear or authoritative indication that they could have returned to their land, even if they wanted to. It would have been nearly impossible to find any descendants of David at that time after the war, especially inside Palestine. Nor would they have been a threat to Rome after all the fortresses were demolished, and most of the people taken away from the land. There were no fortresses, nor any fighters to man the forts. Titus had done a thorough purge of all remaining resistance before his legions left Palestine.

The conditions that are stated in Hegesippus' account speak of a time **before the war** when Jude's grandsons were farmers working the land in peaceful conditions. After the war broke out, such farming would have been virtually impossible. And if they were Christians, they would have already fled the country as Jesus (their grand-uncle) had warned them to do (before the war). This means that Nero (whose name was Domitius) was probably the one who commanded this roundup, and it most likely would have occurred before the outbreak of the war (before AD 66) and before the Neronic persecution against the Christians (AD 64-65). If these grandsons were Christians (and it does seem that they were), then they would have been killed by the Roman Procurator Florus if this scenario occurred after the Neronic persecution broke out in AD 64. This suggests that the incident might have occurred at the time when Luke was in Rome writing his book of Acts (AD 62), explaining why he was unaware of what was going on in Judea (i.e., both the arrest of James, and the arrest of Jude's grandsons, neither of which are mentioned in the book of Acts). The prominence this encounter would have given to Jude and his family may help explain why Jude wrote a book not long after this (AD 64), and why it was included in the canon.

We have noticed that this story poses a real problem for the non-rapture preterists if they wish to agree with the futurists and say that it occurred after AD 70, since it is very apparent from what the grandsons say, that they were familiar with what their grand-uncle (Jesus) had taught about the timing and nature of the about-to-come Kingdom. They knew too much about the Parousia and its NATURE of fulfillment to be totally ignorant of its TIME of fulfillment.

This story is not friendly to the non-rapture preterists, since it shows that these grandsons, who had direct contact with the Christians, the apostles, and the family of Jesus Himself, and who understood

the nature of the coming Kingdom and the signs to look for, were *totally unaware of its occurrence after AD 70*. Is it even possible that they understood the NATURE of fulfillment perfectly, but totally missed the TIME of it? How can that be? How could they NOT be aware that the End of the Age had already come and gone? How could they not be aware that their grand-uncle had returned in glory with His angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution to the persecuting enemies of the Christians? They understood the NATURE of fulfillment perfectly. How could they miss the TIME of fulfillment, especially when they were so well-connected to the Christians and the family of Jesus? Dr. Charles Hill and other futurist patristic experts like him are right to press us on this point. However, the problem vaporizes for all preterists if this incident occurred before AD 70. So, the non-rapture preterists need to quit using this story against the rapture preterists. It will discredit all preterists, including themselves. They are just giving the futurists more ammunition to use against us.

In view of some non-rapture preterists' assertions that the pre-70 saints who lived through and beyond the Parousia were aware of its occurrence and able to acknowledge it, this ignorance of Jude's grandsons (or their refusal to acknowledge it and confess it before men) becomes suspect. Something is desperately wrong here with Eusebius or with Hegesippus or with the grandsons. Either they were not Christians before AD 70 and had no knowledge of the Parousia and judgment and end of the age (and rapture), OR this whole story dates back to the time of Nero when the Parousia was still future for them. I opt for this latter solution. That is the only way to make sense of it consistently.

It simply will not work for the non-rapture preterists to date this story after AD 70, since that puts a heavy burden of proof on them to explain how these grandsons could have such a crystal clear concept of the NATURE of fulfillment, yet be totally clueless about its past occurrence. If they understood the nature of it so well, it would have been easy for them to "recognize the TIME of His visitation" also. They were definitely in a position to have known all about it. They were grandsons of one of the biblical writers (Jude) and the grand-nephews of Jesus himself. They would have known about the Parousia occurring in AD 70. So, unless we want to charge them with lying under oath before Caesar, it would be best to see this story as occurring before AD 70 at a time when the Parousia was still future.

In view of all this, I simply place this story before the war broke out, somewhere in the range of AD 62-64. By placing it there, it removes all the difficulties that the futurists have posed against the preterist view. It seems more likely to have happened before the revolt of the Zealots (AD 66), after which owning and farming their land in Judea would have been virtually impossible.

Furthermore, the language that these two grandsons use to describe the nature of the coming kingdom is unambiguous, suggesting that if the Parousia had already occurred, they would have known about it, since they clearly understood the nature of the event and knew what they were looking for. When we compare their description of the Parousia and kingdom with the NT writings, we notice a lot of similarities with those particular epistles that were written about that time. So, it seems likely that this story took place somewhere in the timeframe of AD 62-64.

Moreover, in view of the Neronic persecution in AD 64-66, the historical window of possibilities becomes even more narrow. If this arrest had occurred after the Neronic persecution broke out in the Summer of AD 64, the two grandsons of Jude would not have survived the interview. Once they admitted to being Christians, they would have been killed. So, this arrest must have occurred before the Neronic persecution broke out. Since their words sound very much like the words of James their grand-uncle, which were written sometime in the AD 61-62 timeframe, there is a good possibility that they were arrested at the same time or shortly after James was arrested and killed (by Ananus II in April of 62). Josephus does say that "James and some of his companions" were arrested at the same time. The whole incident about the ruthless killing of James may have raised some concerns for both Agrippa II and the Roman procurator (Albinus) about the potential for a rebellion led by a messianic leader from the family of King David. Agrippa II had heard about Jesus (son of David) from Apostle Paul when Paul was in prison in Caesarea, just a year or two before this (AD 60).

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem would have used every influence they had on Agrippa II and Albinus to go after the Christians, especially if there was any evidence that any of the Jewish Christians (i.e., Ebionites, Nazaraeans, Judaizers) were looking for a physical descendant of David to become physical King over Judea (in order to replace Agrippa II and the Herodian-Maccabean dynasty, as well as remove the Roman yoke). And we do know that some Judaizing Christians in Judea (e.g., the Ebionites and Nazaraeans) did in fact look for Jesus to return and sit on the literal throne in Jerusalem. They had James (the brother of Jesus) occupying that throne (episcopal seat)

until He returned. When the Jews (Ananus II) killed James in AD 62, the Judaizing sect there in Jerusalem immediately set up Simon Clopas as the new occupant of the episcopal seat until Jesus returned to reclaim it. This would easily explain why the Jewish leaders, and Agrippa II especially, rounded up all the descendants of David, regardless of whether they were Christians or not.

Agrippa II and Ananus II are prime suspects here, since both of them had a motive and opportunity. Agrippa II came to Jerusalem for Passover almost every year, and probably the Feast of Booths also. He had heard Paul give his defense before Festus in AD 60 at the time Paul appealed to Caesar. That may have reminded him about the attempt by his great grandfather (Herod the Great) to wipe out all the infant descendants of David before they replaced his dynasty as King over the Jews (Matt 2:16). His father (Agrippa I) also killed James the brother of John in AD 44, who was a cousin of Jesus. So it would not be very much of a stretch to see Agrippa II try to finish the job that his father and great grandfather had started, which was to kill all the rivals to power and keep the Herodian dynasty on the throne of Judea (cf. Acts 4:26).

Not only did the Herodian rulers have a vested interest in eliminating any Davidic rivals to the throne, but the High Priests (like Ananus II) did as well. Ananus II was the son of the very High Priest (Ananus I) who arrested and killed Jesus 32 years earlier. And that arrest of Jesus was with the charge that He was claiming to be the King of the Jews and trying to overthrow the Roman yoke. The Jewish leadership was in league with the Romans to eliminate any descendants of David from the throne. These factors push me into assigning a very narrow range to this incident (AD 62-64).

The arrest of *"James and some of his companions"* (or relatives, such as these two grandsons of Jude) would have been the most likely time when all those relatives of Jesus would have been rounded up [*Antiq.* 20:200 (20.9.1)]. This occurred in April of 62 right after **Ananus II** had been appointed high priest by Agrippa II. So there was more than one "companion" arrested. Who were the others? I suspect the answer might be found here in this story about Jude's grandsons, as well as in the arrest and exile of Apostle John to Patmos (see below). Since the powerful high priestly families (Ananus, Boethus, Ananias b. Nedebaeus, et al) knew that Jesus was a direct descendant of King David, and therefore had a legitimate claim to the Davidic throne, it would have been their desire to rid themselves of the whole family of Jesus, including all his brothers (James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude) and their sons and grandsons, just like Herod the Great had tried to do (Matt 2:16), and just as Ananus I had tried to do in AD 30 (John 18:13, 24). The word "companions" could be a reference to family relatives, and not merely friends or associates. See my lengthy discussion of this incident involving the arrest of James above (Apr 62). This is probably the same time when Apostle John (a cousin of Jesus, James, and Jude) was arrested and exiled. The arrest of Jude's grandsons could easily have occurred at this same time as well. This is where I prefer to place it (AD 62-64).

Exile of John to Patmos (AD 62)

Apr 62 – John was probably exiled to Patmos as a result of Ananus II's arrest of "James and some of his companions" [*Antiq.* 20:200 (20.9.1)]. The book of Revelation was evidently written sometime very soon after this, after April 62 and before July 64 when some of the signs predicted in Revelation began to occur (e.g., the Neronic persecution). See the comments on the date of Revelation below under the subheading of the Summer of AD 62.

Why did John merely get exiled to Patmos instead of being killed like James? As mentioned above, during his short three-month High Priesthood Ananus II arrested “James and some of his companions.” I believe John was one of those “companions.” Peter was still alive in Jerusalem two years later (AD 64) writing his two epistles. See our notes on the date of 2 Peter below at June of AD 64. The Apostle John was evidently still in Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 2:9) at the time he wrote his three short epistles (at which time it was the “last hour”). John says in Rev. 1:9 that he "was on the island called Patmos" at the time he received this apocalyptic revelation and wrote it down. However, he does not tell us where he was at the time he was arrested. He most likely was in Judea at the time of his arrest and exile.

It is no great surprise that Ananus II would have sent John into exile rather than have him executed, since John tells us in his gospel that he was personally “known to the High Priest” Ananus b. Seth (John 18:15-16) who was the father of this very Ananus II that arrested “James and some of his companions” [*Antiq.* 20.200 (20.9.1)]. This relationship between John and the family of Ananus

evidently spared John's life two more years by allowing him to be exiled rather than killed. This arrest of "James and some of his companions" occurred at Passover (April) AD 62. This means that John would have been exiled to Patmos soon after this (April AD 62) where he wrote the Book of Revelation in mid-to-late AD 62.

Early Date of Revelation (Summer AD 62)

Summer 62 – <u>The Book of Revelation</u> was most likely written sometime between John's arrival on Patmos in the late Spring or early Summer of 62 and the Neronian persecution in late 64 when he was most likely killed. It obviously had to be written before July 64 when some of the signs predicted in Revelation began to occur (e.g., the Great Tribulation or Neronic persecution). My best guess is that Revelation was written in late 62 soon after John had arrived on Patmos (Summer 62), nine months before Paul was released from his first imprisonment (Spring 63). That would explain how both Peter and Paul were seemingly familiar with the contents of the Apocalypse when they wrote their epistles (1 Peter and Hebrews) in late 62 or early AD 63.

A late 62 date for the Apocalypse would also mean that the seven churches had received their warning to repent by late 62 or early 63, over a year before Paul was arrested the second time and wrote his second epistle to Timothy (AD 64), in which he stated that "all who are in Asia [i.e., evidently including the seven churches] had turned away from him" (2 Tim. 1:15). It appears that John's warning to the seven churches in Asia (AD 62) went mostly unheeded.

It is no surprise, therefore, that those churches were devastated in the Neronic persecution. They were close enough to Rome, so that word from Rome about the Neronic persecution (in late AD 64) would have reached them quickly, and the magistrates of those seven cities would have been compelled to round up their Christians and kill them. The non-Christian Jews would have informed the Roman authorities and made sure that the Christians were eliminated.

Some of the Christians in those seven churches may have apostatized, and went back to Judaism (if they were Jewish) or to paganism. It was probably these apostates that Paul made reference to in Second Timothy. Those few who kept the faith would have been killed about the same time Paul, John, and Peter were killed in the Neronic persecution (late AD 64). Two years after Paul complained about the Asian Christians turning away from him, Vespasian brought his troops from Greece (in AD 66) across the Hellespont and traveled the trade route through Asia (where the seven churches were) on his way to Antioch. Any Jews (including Jewish Christians who had apostatized and returned to the synagogue) that Vespasian would have encountered along the way in Asia would have been killed or enslaved, assuming that the non-Jewish residents of those cities had spared them up to that point. But there is every reason to believe that by the time Vespasian came through there, the non-Jews would have already killed or evicted their Jewish residents, including any apostate Christians who had defected back to the synagogue.

Since most of the NT writings (especially Acts) were already written before John was exiled, it is not surprising that they do not mention anything about John being on the island of Patmos, probably also for security reasons. It wasn't safe to be associated with Roman prisoners, especially after the Neronian persecution broke out in the Summer of AD 64. So if any of the NT writings were written after John was exiled to Patmos, they would be putting themselves at risk by mentioning anything about his exile and thus connecting themselves with a condemned man.

One objection to the early date of the book of Revelation focuses on Polycarp's statement that the church in Smyrna (Asia) was not acquainted with apostle Paul at the time Paul wrote his second letter to Corinth (August 57) in which he bragged about the generous contributions of the Macedonians (AD 57). Late-daters of the book of Revelation use this statement of Polycarp to suggest that the church in Smyrna was not even in existence until after AD 70. But that is not what Polycarp says. He simply said that the church in Smyrna (which was obviously in existence at that time) was not founded by Paul and therefore not personally acquainted with him. Like several other churches (e.g., Laodicea, Colossae, Cyprus, Cyrene, Antioch, and others), the church in Smyrna had been started by someone other than Paul. But they were certainly in existence at the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians (August 57). Paul was probably not wanting to intrude on someone else's ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 10:13-16; Rom. 15:18-28), or simply had not had the opportunity to visit them yet. There is also the possibility that Apostle John (or some of his disciples) might have had something to do with the founding of the Smyrna church,

since Polycarp claims to have been taught by some of John's disciples. Or it could have been founded by some of the Jews from Asia who were converted on the first Pentecost (see Acts 2:9). We do not know who founded the church at Smyrna, but we do know that it was in existence before Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians (August 57). See Ken Gentry's discussion of this late date objection in his book, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, pp. 322-326.

It is also possible that Apostle John had visited the churches of Asia after Paul was arrested and sent to Rome in AD 60 (or earlier). John might then have been arrested there in Ephesus and sent in exile to nearby Patmos. This would explain a lot of the traditions we have about the various activities of John in Ephesus. It would not change the date of the book of Revelation, since it had to be written before Paul released the book of Hebrews in early AD 63, and before Peter wrote his two epistles in AD 63-64. This supports the writing of the Apocalypse in about AD 62.

One of the most compelling arguments for the early date is found in the idea that John suffered martyrdom in the Neronic persecution (AD 64) before the Parousia (AD 66). If he died in AD 64, then the book of Revelation was written before his death in AD 64. In Matthew 20:20-23 and Mark 10:35-40, the story is recorded about the mother of the two sons of Zebedee (James and John) asking Jesus to place her two sons on His right and left when He came into his Kingdom Glory. Jesus asked **both** of them if they were able to drink the cup of martyrdom that he was about to drink. They **both** replied that they were able. Then Jesus said to **both** of them (James and John) that they would **both** drink the cup of martyrdom. This means **both** James and John would die before Christ returned. We know that James was killed by Herod Agrippa I in AD 44 (Acts 12:2). But when was John killed?

In the last chapter of John's gospel he negates the rumor that was circulating about his remaining alive until the rapture and thus escaping the experience of physical death (John 21:20-23). He evidently remembered what Jesus had said to him (Matt. 20 and Mk. 10) and the death of his brother James (Acts 12:2), so he negates the rumor that he would remain alive until Christ returned to receive them to Himself (John 14:3). If we place the Parousia in AD 66 when His angelic armies were seen in the skies above Israel, it means John would have died sometime between his exile to Patmos (AD 62) and the Parousia (AD 66). Can we be more precise? I think we can.

The island of Patmos was a Roman-controlled exile colony. Since John was placed under Roman guard on Patmos in AD 62, he could not have been released until either Ananus II died (Feb 68) or Nero died (June 68). Both of those dates would have been long after the Neronic persecution (AD 64) and the Parousia (AD 66). So in order for John to have died before the Parousia like Jesus said he would, it seems most likely that he would have been killed by his Roman captors on the island of Patmos (or in Ephesus, if he had been released from Patmos), soon after Nero began the persecution in July or August 64.

Paul was probably arrested in Troas on his way to Nicopolis for the Winter (Fall of AD 64). Because Paul was a Roman citizen, he would have been taken to Rome for beheading. However, John was not a Roman citizen, and would have been killed right there in Patmos or Ephesus, wherever he was at the time the news came from Rome about the Neronic persecution. That means news of the Neronic persecution would have reached the coast of Turkey by the Fall of AD 64. If John was killed on the island of Patmos during the Neronic persecution, his body may have been taken back to Ephesus for burial, which was less than fifty miles from the coast of Turkey. That may be the source of the confused tradition that John lived in Ephesus. There are also traditions that suggest Mary the mother of Jesus, whom Jesus charged John to care for (at the Cross) may have moved to Ephesus to be near John while he was on Patmos. If he was released from Patmos, that would explain why he settled in Ephesus afterwards. So if John died in the Neronic persecution in late 64, the book of Revelation was written before that, sometime between late AD 62 and late 64, probably in mid-to-late AD 62).

Regarding John's release from exile on Patmos, there are a couple of possibilities. First, since Ananus II, the High Priest who probably exiled him (in April 62), was removed from office shortly afterwards (July 62), it is always possible that Agrippa II or Albinus may have released John from the exile. However, I do not think that is the case. My belief is that after Paul was released (March 63) through the help of Apollos and Zenas the lawyer, then they were sent to Patmos to secure John's release. We will talk more about that when we get to Paul's release (AD 63).

Because of his exile under Ananus II who was still alive until AD 68, John would not have been allowed to return to Palestine, even if he was freed from Patmos. It is most likely that he would have taken up residence in nearby Ephesus if he was released from Patmos. And there are subtle hints in Paul's epistle to Titus (in AD 63) that Zenas the lawyer and Apollos the orator may have traveled to

Patmos to secure John's release, at which time he would have taken up residence in nearby Ephesus (the first of the seven churches to which his Apocalypse was addressed).

One of the best arguments for the early date of Revelation is Peter's mention of "Babylon" in 1 Pet. 5:13, which implies that Peter had read the book of Revelation before he wrote his first epistle in AD 63-64. The same may be implied by Peter's references to the New Heavens and Earth in 2 Peter 3 (written in AD 64), and Paul's references to the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, and unshakable new heavens and earth in his epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 12) which was written just before he was released from his first Roman imprisonment (March AD 63).

We need to look at those three texts before going any further. Note the references to "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13), plus Paul's statements about the heavenly Jerusalem and New Heavens and Earth (Heb. 12), and the discussion about the heavens and earth in 2 Pet. 3.

These references to Babylon and the New Heavens and Earth do not prove that Paul and Peter had seen the book of Revelation by the time they wrote their epistles in AD 63-64, but they do suggest at the very least that these things were known to Paul and Peter by this time, either by direct revelation to them at the same time John had received it, or by reading the book of Revelation. What are the chances that these things could be mentioned in three separate epistles, using the same kind of description as we find in Revelation, without Peter and Paul having read or known about the statements in Revelation, and without them having already been revealed to John? And if Peter and Paul had already received independent revelations about this before AD 70, why would John need to have it all revealed to him again after AD 70? Why didn't Paul and Peter just give us all the details in their epistles? The obvious answer to that is because John had already given those details in the book of Revelation which was written before Paul and Peter wrote. Paul and Peter had seen the Apocalypse and did not need to give the details. By alluding to it in their three epistles, they were showing not only that they were aware of John's Apocalypse, but were in full agreement with it. It was Peter's way of putting his stamp of canonical approval on the Apocalypse.

Notice also the similarity between Paul's statements in Heb. 13:13-14 ("Let us go out to Him outside the camp") and John's statements in Rev. 18:4 ("Come out of her my people"). Paul was evidently aware of the warning in Revelation to get out of Jerusalem before the End came "in a very little while" (Heb. 10:37). It is no coincidence that Paul says this right after he had discussed several other ideas that appear to have been likewise drawn from the book of Revelation (Heb. ch. 12). This again implies that Revelation was written and in circulation before Paul wrote his epistle to the Hebrew Christians (i.e., before March AD 63).

If Paul was aware of the book of Revelation when he wrote Hebrews, then that would allow for the writing of Revelation as early as late AD 62 a few months after John arrived on Patmos. If Paul and Peter received an independent revelation of these things at the same time John did, then that would allow the writing of Revelation anytime before mid-63. In any case, it had to have been written before the Neronian persecution broke out in late AD 64, when Peter, Paul and John would have been killed.

Here we have three separate witnesses to the material that is found in Revelation, all three of which were written in AD 63-64 (well over six years before the destruction of Jerusalem). If Paul was aware of the book of Revelation when he wrote Hebrews, then that would allow for the writing of Revelation as early as late AD 62 a few months after John arrived on Patmos. If Paul and Peter merely received an independent revelation of these things at the same time John did, then that would allow the writing of Revelation anytime before the Neronian persecution broke out in late AD 64, when Peter, Paul and John would have been killed. The book of Revelation predicts the Neronic persecution and all the martyrs that went to heaven as a result of that "great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14). This for sure dates the book before the Neronic persecution in late AD 64.

Many have asked me about the **seven churches of Asia** that are mentioned in Rev. 2-3. What happened to them? Since the book of Revelation (written in AD 63) warned them to repent, or else they would be destroyed soon, it seems that they must have been destroyed soon after the book was written. The event which caused their candlesticks to be removed was probably the Neronic persecution (AD 64), which evidently spread quickly to the cities on the Mediterranean rim. This indeed occurred not long after the book was written. This again points to the book of Revelation being written and in circulation before the outbreak of the Neronic persecution in late AD 64. We will deal more with this when we get to **Sept AD 64** ("**What happened to the seven churches of Asia?**").

Date of Revelation Based on Laodicea and Smyrna (AD 62-64)

We need to take a look at the **seven churches of Asia (Turkey)** that are addressed in the book of Revelation. Not only will it help us determine the date when Revelation was written, but it will also give us a much better grasp of what was happening to the Christians during this very traumatic time in the four years just before the Jewish War (AD 62-66).

Some futurists use the following two arguments about the seven churches of Asia to late-date the book of Revelation: (1) Laodicea could not have recovered from the earthquake in only two years, and (2) the church in Smyrna did not even exist yet in AD 62.

Both Ken Gentry and Don Preston have done an excellent job of debunking these futurist arguments, and I will share some of their comments below. We will easily see that the futurist case for the late date of Revelation is not supported by Scripture, nor historically defensible either.

1. Laodicea's Quick Recovery From the Earthquake

Several futurist commentary writers (Leon Morris and others) have claimed that the historical conditions of the churches alluded to here in Revelation 2-3 indicate that the Apocalypse was not written until after a long period of development. For instance, Leon Morris uses Rev. 3:17 ('I am rich, and have become wealthy") to make the point that the church in Laodicea evidently had enjoyed a long period of development during which they became wealthy and lethargic. Leon Morris goes on to say:

> "This [long period of development] would scarcely have been possible at the time of the Neronic persecution, the only serious competitor in date to the Domitianic period" [Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969. p. 37 (quoted in Gentry)]. Mounce, Swete, Kummel, Guthrie, and Beale employ the same argument" [Ken Gentry, *The Beast of Revelation*. Revised Edition. Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 2002. p. 231].

Before analyzing the futurist argument in detail, we need to know the reason why they press this argument in the first place. In AD 60, there was a severe earthquake in the Lycus valley which affected all seven cities mentioned in Revelation 2-3. It is reported in Tacitus *Annals* 14:27 (5:151), from which most scholars derive the date of AD 60. However, both Eusebius (*Chronicle* 64) and Orosius from the fourth century suggest that it might have happened after the Great Fire in Rome (i.e., after AD 64). But since Tacitus is the first century historian here, he most likely has the correct date (AD 60). The Roman government offered financial assistance to rebuild their city, but Laodicea was so wealthy that they declined the offer and quickly rebuilt their city without any help from the Roman government. Some of the other nearby cities (such as Colossae, Hierapolis, etc.) evidently took the relief funds from Nero to rebuild. The Laodiceans were very proud of their wealth and self-sufficiency, the very thing for which the book of Revelation reproves them (Rev. 3:17-19). The very fact that Revelation rebukes them for this pride, implies that their proud refusal of the offered assistance occurred recently. If this letter to Laodicea had been written 35 years later, long after they had recovered and a new generation had risen up who had not experienced the earthquake and its recovery, this rebuke would have no potency. The earthquake occurred in AD 60. This letter to them in the book of Revelation was written in late AD 62 (almost two years after they had declined the offer of assistance, and after they had recovered from the quake). Most of the late-daters of Revelation deny that Laodicea (and the other cities) could have recovered this quickly. However, other Roman cities had recovered this soon from similar disasters, and Laodicea was wealthy enough to do it. So this is not a problem for the early date. Ken Gentry deals well with this issue in his excellent book, *Before Jerusalem Fell* (pp. 318-322):

Quotes from Gentry in Before Jerusalem Fell:

Morris notes that in the Laodicean letter "we are told that the church in Laodicea was 'rich and increased with goods' (3:17). But as the city was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 60, this must have been considerably later" (Morris, p. 37). **Mounce** and **Kummel** also endorse this observation, a major

component of the complex of evidence derived from the seven letters [to the seven churches of Asia]" [Ken Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*. Revised Edition. Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 1998. p. 319].

> The idea behind [their] argument is that such a devastating event as an earthquake must necessarily have severe and long term economic repercussions on the community. And in such a community, the minority Christians could be expected to have suffered, perhaps even disproportionately. If Revelation were written sometime in the period from [AD 62-70], it would seem to Morris, Mounce, and others, that the time-frame would be too compressed to allow for the enrichment of the church at Laodicea, as is suggested in Revelation. But by the time of Domitian a few decades later, such an enrichment of the church would not be difficult to imagine [Ken Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*. Revised Edition. Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 1998. pp. 319-320].

> [**Mounce** even admits that] "the material wealth of Laodicea is well established. The huge sums taken from Asian cities by Roman officials during the Mithridatic period [beginning 65 BC] and following indicate enormous wealth," [but then Mounce tries to mitigate the impact of that idea upon his late date argument by saying that] "the wealth claimed by the Laodicean church was not material but spiritual ... the Laodiceans felt they were secure in their spiritual attainment." [Robert H. Mounce. *The Book of Revelation*. *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 126] Quoted in Gentry, *BJF*, pp. 320-321.

> If material riches are in view here, as most late-daters allege, then they need to deal with "...the documented fact of Laodicea's apparently effortless, unaided, and rapid recovery from the earthquake. Tacitus reports that the city did not even find it necessary to apply for an imperial subsidy to help them rebuild, even though such was customary for cities in Asia Minor. As Tacitus records it, Laodicea "arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us" [Tacitus *Annals* 14:27]. This is as clear a statement as is necessary to demonstrate that Laodicea's economic strength was not radically diminished by the quake. Despite the quake, economic resources were so readily available within Laodicea that the city could easily recover itself from the damage. ...Furthermore, it would seem that the time element would not be extremely crucial [since] *'earthquakes were very frequent thereabouts, and rebuilding doubtless followed at once'* [F.J.A. Hort, *The Apocalypse of St. John*: I-III. London: Macmillan, 1908. p. xx.]." [Ken Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*. Revised Edition. Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 1998. p. 321]

Both **Strabo** [64 BC - AD 19] and **Dio Cassius** [AD 150-235] support the contention that cities in Asia could, and did, recover very quickly from earthquakes. [See Strabo, *Geographica* 12:8.16-18; and Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 54:30, both of which are cited in Gentry, *BJF*, p. 321n] See quotes below:

> **Strabo** says: "16. **Laodiceia**, formerly a small town, has increased in our time, and in that of our ancestors, although it received great injury when it was besieged by Mithridates Eupater; however the **fertility of the soil** and the **prosperity** of some of its citizens have aggrandized it. First, Hiero embellished the city with many offerings, and bequeathed to the people more than 2000 talents; then Zeno the rhetorician, and his son Polemo, were an ornament and support to it; the latter was thought by Antony, and afterwards by Augustus Caesar, worthy even of the rank of king in consequence of his valiant and upright conduct. The country around Laodiceia **breeds excellent sheep**, remarkable not only for the **softness of their wool**, in which they surpass the Milesian flocks, but for their **dark or raven colour**. The Laodiceans **derive a large revenue from them**, as the **Colosseni** do from their flocks, of a colour of the same name. ...the country **abounds with caverns** and is **liable to earthquakes**. For of all the countries **Laodiceia is very subject to earthquakes**, as also the neighboring district Carura. 17. ...Nearly the whole of the country about the Maeander [river], as far as the inland parts, is **subject to earthquakes**, and is undermined by fire and water. For all this **cavernous condition** of the country, beginning from the plains, extends to the Charonia; it exists likewise in Hierapolis, and in Acharaca in the district Nysaeis, also in the plain of Magnesia, and in Myus. ... 18. Phrygia Catacecaumene (i.e., the Burnt), which is occupied by Lydians and Mysians, obtained this name from something of the following kind. In **Philadelphia**, a city adjoining to it, even the walls of the houses are not safe, for nearly every day they are shaken, and crevices appear. The inhabitants are **constantly attentive** to these accidents to which the ground is subject, and **build with a view to their occurrence**. Apameia among other cities experienced ... **frequent earthquakes**, and

the king on his arrival, when he saw the overthrow of the city, **gave a hundred talents for its restoration**. It is said that the same thing happened in the time of Alexander. ...For earthquakes overthrew the present Magnesia, which is situated below that mountain, at the time that **Sardis** and other celebrated cities in various parts sustained great injury. [footnote: The number of cities destroyed were twelve, and the catastrophe took place in the night. An inscription relating to this event is still preserved at Naples. Tacitus *Annals* B. ii. c. 47. Suetonius in V. *Tiberii*]. The emperor [Tiberius] gave a **sum of money for their restoration**, as formerly his father [Augustus] had **assisted the Tralliani** on the occurrence of a similar calamity, when the gymnasium and other parts of the city were destroyed; in the same manner he had **assisted also the Laodiceans**." See Strabo, *Geographica* 12:8.16-18. Found here: http://books.google.ca/books?id=KcdfAAAAMAAJ

Dio Cassius tells us that Caesar Augustus evidently considered that the average recovery time for those cities in Asia as being about *two years*: "The province of Asia also stood very greatly in need of some assistance on account of **earthquakes**, and [Augustus Caesar] therefore paid into the public treasury from his own resources their annual tribute and assigned them a governor [to manage the rebuilding effort] **for two years**" See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 54:30. Found here: http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=1478418&pageno=57

The above quotes from Strabo and Dio Cassius show three things: (1) Earthquakes were very common in the region of Asia Minor and the local residents were well-experienced in dealing with recovery afterwards. (2) They would have begun the recovery effort immediately, since their source of income and maintenance of their wealth depended on it. (3) Dio Cassius indicates how long a normal period of recovery lasted, i.e., about two years.

Gentry makes a valid point when he notes that the Laodiceans had every incentive to rebuild quickly in order to restart their wealth-generating engine again. The area had several huge economic advantages which they would not walk away from, knowing that others would immediately come in and seize the opportunity. There was no time to waste. Any delay would have cost them a lot of potential income, especially from the black wool trade, and other profitable agricultural industries in the area. "Simple economic analysis demands that for the resources to survive, rebuilding would have to be rapid." [Ken Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*. Revised Edition. Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 1998. p. 321]

As we have shown previously, the book of Revelation was written in late 62, **almost two years after the earthquake** in Laodicea in late 60, thus allowing **enough time for them to have recovered** from it, and already taking **pride in their self-sufficiency by the time John wrote the book of Revelation**. Their recovery was probably quickened by the fact that they did not have to wait for the government to send relief money. They had enough wealth to fully finance their own recovery. So, the rebuilding could have begun immediately and been finished easily within the normal two year time frame. Their pride in self-recovery would be easy to explain in such a circumstance, thus justifying the rebuke from Jesus in the Apocalypse.

2. No Church in Smyrna Before AD 70?

Quote from Gentry: "Leon Morris' second evidence from the Seven Letters is that "the church at Smyrna seems not to have been in existence in the days of Paul." [Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969. p. 37. Quoted by Gentry in BJF, p. 322]. Obviously, if the church mentioned in Revelation 2:8-11 did not exist until after Paul's death it would have to have been founded later than [that]. This would push the dates forward too far to allow any view of Revelation's dating that precedes [AD 70]. This late date objection is founded on the well-known statement in a letter to the church at Philippi by **Polycarp**: *"But I have not found any such thing in you [i.e., the church at Philippi], neither have heard thereof, among whom the blessed Paul labored, who were his letters in the beginning. For he boasted of you in all those churches which alone at that time knew God; for we knew him not as yet"* [Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians* 11:3]. Polycarp (c. AD 69-155), bishop of the church at Smyrna, is thought to have been a disciple of John the Apostle. He seems to refer here to the Smyrnean church when he writes "we knew him not as yet." This may mean: our church at Smyrna was not yet founded. R. H. Charles and James Moffatt deem this to be the most substantial of the arguments drawn from the contents of the Seven Letters. [And this argument] has found currency in a host of scholarly works." [Ken Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*. Revised Edition. Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 1998. p. 322-323]

The Meaning of Polycarp's Statement

Part of this verse (11:3) in Polycarp's letter to Philippi is missing from all the Greek manuscripts, so it has been supplied from the Latin versions. Also, unfortunately there are a couple of textual variations in this verse (11:3) in the Latin, but nothing which affects the meaning significantly. If the Latin text is not an interpolation, as some have alleged, then the meaning is clear: The Smyrneans did not **know God** (or the Lord) at the time Paul was boasting about the generosity of the Philippians "in all the churches which **knew the Lord**." That means that in AD 57-58, at the time when Paul was traveling among the churches on his third journey collecting the Gentile contributions to take to Jerusalem, and boasting of the generosity of the Philippians (see Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:1-5), in order to stir up the other churches to be generous as well, that the church of Smyrna had not been established yet. Let's look more closely at the textual issues, some of the different translations of Polycarp's letter to the church at Philippi, and then our evaluation of it:

> [Textual Note on *Polycarp to the Philippians* 11:3 from Michael W. Holmes] "The Epistle before us is not perfect in any of the Greek manuscripts which contain it. But the chapters [missing] in Greek are [supplied from] an ancient Latin version. While there is no ground for supposing, as some have done, that the whole Epistle is spurious, there seems considerable force in the arguments by which many others have sought to prove chapter 13 to be an interpolation."
>
> **Roberts & Donaldson Translation (Ante-Nicene Church Fathers Volume 1):**
> But I have neither seen nor heard of any such thing among you, in the midst of whom the blessed Paul laboured, and who are commended in the beginning of his Epistle. For he boasts of you in all those Churches which alone then **knew the Lord**; but we [of Smyrna] had not yet **known Him**.
>
> **Lightfoot Translation of Apostolic Fathers:**
> **Phili. 11:3** But I have not found any such thing in you, neither have heard thereof, among whom the blessed Paul labored, who were his *letters* in the beginning. For *he boasteth of you in* all those *churches* which alone at that time **knew God**; for we **knew Him** not as yet.
>
> **Holmes Translation of Apostolic Fathers:**
> **Phili. 11:3** But I have not observed or heard of any such thing among you, in whose midst the blessed Paul labored, and who are praised in the beginning of his letter. For he boasts about you in all the churches—the ones that at that time had come to **know the Lord**, for we had not yet come to **know him**.
>
> [Gentry's Comment] R.H. Charles makes much of this argument: The Church of Smyrna did not exist in 60-64 AD, at a time when St. Paul was boasting of the Philippians in all the Churches. ...But though Polycarp's letter tells us that the Church of Smyrna was not founded in 60-64 AD, he gives no hint as to when it was founded. Hence several years may have elapsed after that date before it was founded. When, however, we turn to Rev. 2:8-11 we find that our text presupposes a Church poor in wealth but rich in good works, with a development of apparently many years to its credit. [R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols. *International Critical Commentary*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920. p. l:xciv] [Gentry, *BJF*, p. 323]

There are a couple of assumptions made by R. H. Charles which simply do not hold up under scrutiny. First of all, he assumes that the time of Paul's boasting about the Philippians among the churches was not until AD 60-64. Secondly, he assumes that the church at Smyrna did not exist until after Apostle Paul had died, thus implying that "several years" may have elapsed before the Smyrnean church was founded. Here is the statement of Polycarp again: *"But I have not found any such thing in you [i.e., the church at Philippi], neither have heard thereof, among whom the blessed Paul labored, who were his letters in the beginning. For he boasted of you in all those churches which alone at that time knew God; for we knew him not as yet"* [Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians,* 11:3]. Notice that the time before the Smyrna church was founded is identified by Polycarp as being when Paul was boasting about the Philippian church to some of his other churches. This raises the question of when this particular boasting of Paul was done.

There are a couple of scriptures which help answer that question. Keep in mind when these texts were written:

> **2 Cor. 8:1-5 [written in late 57 or early 58 AD on Paul's third journey]** Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of **Macedonia** [Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea], that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and *this,* not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

> **Rom. 15:26 [written in early 58 AD on Paul's third journey]** For **Macedonia** and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

> **Php. 4:15-17 [written in late 62 or early 63 AD while Paul was in Rome]** You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left **Macedonia [in AD 51]**, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

In Php. 4:15-17, Paul does not say whether he boasted about the generosity of the Philippian church in AD 51 after he left Macedonia and went to Corinth, but in 2 Cor. 8:1-5, written in late 57 or early 58 from Macedonia, Paul clearly boasts of the liberality of the Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea). So, we know that he was boasting about the Philippians to the Corinthians in late 57 or early 58 AD. And in Rom. 15:26, Paul boasts of both the Macedonians and Achaians in his letter to the Romans, written in early 58 AD. That definitely gives us a lower limit for the date on which the church at Smyrna could have been founded – no earlier than early 58 AD. This means that the Smyrnean church was probably not established until after Paul had completed his third journey in early 58 AD.

Polycarp does not indicate who founded the church in Smyrna, nor when it was established, but in order for it to be addressed in the book of Revelation, which was written in AD 62, it would have needed to be in existence for at least a couple years before 62, long enough for them to have suffered "tribulation, poverty, and the blasphemy of those who were of the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9). That implies at least a couple of years. If the church in Smyrna was established sometime in 58, then they would have had almost four years to experience all the things that the book of Revelation mentions. Let's look at some scriptural evidence which supports this.

In Ephesians, which was one of Paul's early prison epistles (composed in late 62 or early 63), and evidently written as a general letter (encyclical) to be distributed among all the churches of Asia, he indicates that he had "**heard about the faith** in the Lord Jesus which existed among them." Commentators are quick to point out that Paul did not need to be told about the faith that existed in the Ephesian church. He had spent over three years there building the church in Ephesus. He knew that church personally. So, what other churches in Asia would be reading this general encyclical letter besides Ephesus, whose faith Paul had only "heard about" and not seen personally? I think Paul's epistle to the Colossians may help us out here:

> **Col. 2:1** For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at **Laodicea**, and for **all those who have not personally seen my face.**

Here Paul implies that Laodicea was one of those churches that had not personally seen his face, but had evidently heard about him and been taught the gospel by some of Paul's fellow workers. Epaphras comes to mind here, since he was from Colossae, and was one of Paul's fellow-workers ("bondslave of Jesus"), evidently taught and trained by Paul and sent out to preach the gospel in the region around Ephesus, especially near his home area of Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. Note what Paul says about Epaphras here in the letter to the Colossians:

> **Col. 4:12-13 Epaphras**, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully

assured in all the will of God. For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in **Laodicea** and **Hierapolis**.

Notice the mention of the two other churches in **Laodicea** and **Hierapolis** for which **Epaphras** also had a "deep concern," implying that he may have been closely involved with them at one time, maybe even the one who originally shared the gospel with them. Four verses later, in Col. 4:17, Paul exhorts **Archippus** to fulfill the ministry that he had received. Archippus was another of Paul's fellow workers who was evidently ministering among the Colossians at that time. There is no record of Paul establishing those churches in Colossae, Hierapolis, or Laodicea. Paul says only that he had "heard of their faith" (Col. 1:4) through some of his fellow workers, evidently Epaphras and Archippus, who were probably sent out by Paul to do the original mission work there.

But these three churches (Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis) were most likely not the only churches that were established by some of Paul's fellow workers, either while Paul was there in Ephesus during his third journey, or after he left in AD 57. What about the other five churches of Asia (besides Ephesus and Laodicea) that are mentioned in Revelation 2-3 (Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, or Philadelphia)? **Thyatira** is an easy one. On Paul's second missionary journey while in Philippi he converted Lydia, who was a seller of purple dye and/or purple cloth from Thyatira. She could easily have given Paul a list of contacts in Thyatira, and Paul could have sent some of his fellow workers there during the three years he was in Ephesus on his third journey (Acts 19:9).

Note also that **Colossians 4:16** instructs the saints in Colossae to read Paul's letter that was coming to Colossae by way of the church in Laodicea, and to send a copy of the Colossian letter to Laodicea. This is very suggestive and thought-provoking. Laodicea was one of the seven churches of Asia addressed in the book of Revelation. In fact, it was the last stop on the circuit, beginning from Ephesus, going up along the coast to Smyrna and Pergamum, then down the Roman postal road through Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia to Laodicea. All the commentary writers who deal with both Ephesians and Colossians have noted this connection. The letter coming from Laodicea was probably the Ephesian letter (a general encyclical) that had started its rounds in Ephesus and then passed through the other five churches of Asia on its way to Laodicea, which was the last stop on the Asian circuit. But since Colossae and Hierapolis were nearby, the letter was sent onward from Laodicea to them. It seems pretty clear from all the futurist commentaries that the Ephesian letter was a general epistle, designed as an encyclical to be circulated among all the churches of Asia on the circuit between Ephesus and Laodicea. As we know, Smyrna was the next stop on that circuit after Ephesus (only 30 miles away). This certainly suggests and allows for the possibility that there was a church in Smyrna by the time Paul wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians (late 62 or early 63).

But that is not all the evidence we have for a church in Smyrna before AD 62. Note the following texts which speak of many other Christians in Asia besides Ephesus:

1Cor. 16:19 [written from Ephesus in AD 57] The **churches of Asia** greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Notice the plural number of "churches of Asia" that are mentioned here in AD 57. How many churches were in Asia at that time? It was more than one. It may not have included Smyrna yet, but it certainly included others besides Ephesus.

Acts 19:10 This took place for two years [AD 56-57], so that **all who lived in Asia** heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Luke tells us that the gospel had gone out from Ephesus while Paul was there, so that "all who lived in Asia heard the word." Did this include Smyrna and the other five cities besides Ephesus? It would not be hard to believe that some folks in Smyrna heard the gospel at this time, but did not believe it and form a church there until after Paul had left the area (after AD 58).

Acts 19:22 And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in **Asia** for a while. [AD 57]

Note that while Paul was in Ephesus and in Asia, he sent his fellow workers out to other places. Could he have sent some of his fellow workers to the other six cities of Asia, including Smyrna? We know that Epaphras and Archippus went to Laodicea, Colossae, and Hierapolis. Some of the other fellow workers of

Paul could easily have been sent to Smyrna and the other five Asian cities as well. There is nothing in Polycarp's statements which forbid this, and even if they did, they are not inspired anyway. Polycarp's statements cannot trump Scripture.

> **Acts 19:26** "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of **Asia**, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. [AD 57]

Paul was accused of converting a "considerable number of people ... not only in Ephesus, but in **almost all of Asia**" during that three years he was in Ephesus. This may not have included Smyrna, but it must have set the stage and prepared the way for the gospel to bear fruit in Smyrna soon after Paul left the area [after AD 57-58]. Smyrna was a major city in Asia, and it would be hard to believe that no converts were made there until decades later, even though "almost all the other cities in Asia" had churches planted among them at this time.

Polycarp does imply that there was no church in Smyrna at the time Paul was boasting about the generosity of the Philippians (in AD 57-58). Polycarp said, "*we knew [God] not as yet*." That certainly seems to mean that the church had not yet been established in Smyrna at the time Paul boasted about the Philippians. Polycarp says the Smyrneans did not know God yet at that time (AD 57-58).

If Polycarp can be trusted here, it means that the church in Smyrna could not have been established during the three years while Paul was in Ephesus on his third journey (AD 54-57), nor while Paul was boasting about the Philippians to the Corinthians and Romans (AD 57-58). But it does not rule out the possibility of the Smyrna church being established shortly afterwards (mid-to-late 58).

One of Paul's fellow workers could have gone to Smyrna and established the church there anytime after Paul finished his third journey and headed to Jerusalem (mid-58 AD). Even if the church in Smyrna was not established until late 58, it still allows almost four years of church development time before John wrote the Apocalypse (in late 62). That is plenty of time for the church to be planted there and be suffering "tribulation, poverty, and blasphemy" by the time Revelation was written (Rev. 2:9).

Below we have included an article from Don Preston's excellent book entitled, *Who Is This Babylon?* Don deals with this same issue about the founding date of the church in Smyrna. He does an excellent job of refuting the arguments of the futurist Mark Hitchcock.

There are several other indications in these letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3) that the Apocalypse was written at a time before the Neronic persecution and before the destruction of Jerusalem when the Jews had the freedom and opportunity to persecute the Christians: ("synagogue of Satan", "come and bow down before you", "tribulation ten days", "great tribulation" about to come, etc.).

We need to be more familiar with these two chapters of Revelation (chapters 2 and 3), in order to determine whether it fits better in a before-70 timeframe, or in an after-70 timeframe. In Rev 2-3 we can see what things were like for those seven churches of Asia just before the Neronic persecution struck in AD 64. We will also look more closely at all seven churches, trying to discover what happened to them during the Neronic persecution and afterwards.

Don Preston's Article:

"Revelation 2:9 Smyrna: Did It Exist at an Early Date?"
Found in the book: *Who Is This Babylon?* (pp. 12-13)

One of the seemingly strongest objections to an early date of Revelation is the claim that **the church at Smyrna did not even exist during Paul's ministry**, i.e., during the early 60's. Hitchcock cites Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, that "the Smyrneans did not know the Lord during the time Paul was ministering." [Mark Hitchcock, "The Stake in the Heart: the AD 95 Date of Revelation," chapter 6 in Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice's book: *The End Times Controversy*, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2003. p. 147]

Now this sounds impressive. However, what does the Bible have to say? Acts 19:10 recounts Paul's ministry in Corinth, where he ministered for two years. Luke says, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." There are two things to consider here.

First, it is well known that Paul always emphasized evangelism in the major metropolitan centers. His philosophy seemed to be that if the gospel was planted in these major centers, that it would naturally

spread to the outlying regions. It should go without saying that Smyrna was a major city in Asia, and would have been the focus of this kind of directed, if not personal, evangelism.

Second, the emphatic declaration that "all of Asia" had heard the gospel cannot be discounted, nor can one argue from silence, saying that since Smyrna is not mentioned that it is not included. One could exclude all of the cities in Asia based on that logic. Given Paul's *modus operandi*, and the comprehensive nature of the language, it is far preferable to accept the testimony of Scripture over that of Polycarp.

What is troubling, for those who accept inspiration, is the willingness of Hitchcock and others, to accept the testimony of uninspired men over statements of the Bible. Hitchcock argues like this: Polycarp says the church at Smyrna did not exist in Paul's day. Acts 19 says that all of Asia heard the gospel, but it does not mention Smyrna specifically, therefore, this silence means, "In the face of scriptural silence and the specific statement of Polycarp, it seems best to let Polycarp's statement stand" (Hitchcock, 148). The trouble is, that the Scriptures are not silent. Luke does say that all of Asia, and that most definitely includes Smyrna, did hear the gospel. Thus, we have Hitchcock saying it is better to accept the uninspired testimony of Polycarp over the inspired testimony of Luke. Personally, I find it "best to let *Luke's* statement stand."

We cannot leave this section without noting that just like in Philadelphia, the problem for the saints in Smyrna was "the synagogue of Satan." It was those, "who say they are Jews, but are a synagogue of Satan." As we shall see below, this indicates an early period in which the debate over the identity of "the Sons of God" was raging at its hottest, and that fits the pre-70 scenario the best. The problem is not Roman persecution. It is a conflict between the old synagogue and the new synagogue of the Messiah. The old synagogue refused to be gathered into Messiah (Matthew 23:37), and consequently faced imminent judgment. This historical situation fits the pre-70 world far better than the post.

As Vanderwaal says, "Revelation, like the rest of the New Testament, contains a running polemic against the Jews and their rejection of Christ. It shares this theme with many of the early Christian passion homilies, which were testimonies against the Jews. The thesis that Revelation is directed against Rome is indefensible on scholarly grounds." [Cornelius Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy*. Originally published by Paideia Press in St. Catharines, Ontario Canada, 1978. Reprinted by Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, Alberta Canada, 1991. p. 76]

What Happened to the Seven Churches of Asia?

We constantly need to emphasize the significance and severity of the Neronic persecution. It is one of the most traumatic events in the history of the church just before the Parousia. But as important as it is for our understanding, it has been almost totally ignored by futurists. And even many preterists have grossly underestimated its impact on the church, and failed to grasp its timing and sequencing in relation to the other endtime events.

One of the best ways to come to grips with the implications of the Neronic persecution, is to see how it affected the various churches scattered throughout the Diaspora during those two short years before the Jewish War (AD 64-66). The seven churches of Asia Minor (Turkey) that are mentioned in the book of Revelation are good examples of how the Neronic persecution affected all the churches scattered throughout the Roman world and Diaspora. There is quite a bit of information in the New Testament about those seven churches right up to the very moment when the Neronic persecution was about to break out.

You will want to check the maps in the back of your Bible to get a visual idea of where those seven churches were located in relation to the island of Patmos, and why they were arranged in the order they are in the book of Revelation. Those seven cities were arranged along the Roman roads and trade routes in western Turkey. It was an upside down U-shaped circuit beginning with Ephesus and ending at Laodicea. The order of those letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation follows the same order of those cities along the Roman roads and trade routes.

It will be helpful to visualize their location on the Bible maps before looking at the seven letters of Jesus to those seven churches. The seven letters are found in Revelation chapters two and three. You might want to read those two chapters (Rev 2-3) before looking at the charts below which analyze those seven messages:

The Messages to the Seven Churches

The following color-coded chart will help us analyze the messages that Christ sent to the seven churches two years before the Neronic persecution. Notice the color key and what each color represents. Below the charts there is an explanation of the various messages to the seven churches.

Key to the Color Highlights:

Gold = the Overcomers (those who died as martyrs in the persecution)
Green = the Faithful who lived and remained until the Parousia
Red = Rewards offered to the Faithful
Blue = Punishments threatened against the Wicked

What does Revelation 2-3 say would happen to the Seven churches?

CHURCH	Reward Offered	Punishment Threatened	History After AD 62
Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7)	To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the **tree of life** which is in the Paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7)	Repent; or else I am coming to you and will **remove your lampstand** out of its place – unless you repent. (Rev. 2:5)	
Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11)	Be faithful until death, and I will give you the **crown of life**. ... He who overcomes will **not be hurt by the second death**. (Rev. 2:10-11)	the **second death** (Rev. 2:11)	"...you are about to **suffer** ... the devil is about to cast some of you into **prison** ... you will be **tested**, and you will have **tribulation** for ten days. Be faithful until **death**..." (Rev. 2:10)
Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-17)	To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the **hidden manna**, and I will give him a **white stone**, and a **new name** written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it. (Rev. 2:17)	Repent; or else I am coming to you **quickly**, and I will **make war** against them with **the sword** of My mouth (Rev. 2:16)	

Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29) Note the mention of two different groups of saints here: (1) the overcomers, and (2) those who lived and remained faithful until the end. They both get the same reward at the Parousia, whether they were dead or alive. This pretty clearly defines who the overcomers were (martyrs).	He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give **authority over the nations**; and he shall **rule them with a rod of iron**, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the **morning star**. (Rev. 2:26-28)	I will throw [Jezebel] on a **bed of sickness**, and those who commit adultery with her into **great tribulation**, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will **kill her children with pestilence**, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. (Rev. 2:22-23)	I will throw [Jezebel] on a **sick-bed**, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will **kill her children with pestilence** (Rev. 2:22-23) Bullinger notes that 2 heretics (Cerdon & Marcion) claimed that there was no church in Thyatira in AD 95. But there was a church there in AD 62 when John wrote Revelation.
Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6) Living saints would "walk with Him in white" at His coming, like Enoch "walked with God," implying a bodily change for the living (1Cor 15:52; 2Cor 5:1-4) and new white clothing (immortal bodies) for the overcomers whose bodies had been divested in martyrdom.	But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will **walk with Me in white**, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be **clothed in white garments**; and I will **not erase his name from the book of life**, and I will **confess his name before My Father and before His angels**. (Rev. 3:4-5)	So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, **I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you**. (Rev. 3:3)	The ancient city of Sardis is no longer there today. It lies desolate.
Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13)	hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your **crown**. He who overcomes, I will make him a **pillar in the temple** of My God, and he will **not go out from it anymore**; and I will **write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city** of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and **My new name**. (Rev. 3:11-12)	**the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world**, to test those who dwell on the earth ... will take [away] your **crown** (Rev. 3:10-11)	I have put before you an open door which no one can shut ... Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie – *I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you*. ... **I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world**, to test those who dwell on the earth. **I am coming quickly** (Rev 3:8-11)

Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) Living saints would get white garments (like Sardis) so their nakedness would be covered (like the parable of wedding guests). Rev. 3:21 clearly defines the overcomers as martyrs: Just like Jesus overcame by His death and sat down to reign, so also these overcomers through martyrdom would get to reign. Peter explains how "suffering in the flesh" overcomes imputed sin: "...since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (1Pet. 4:1)	... buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may **become rich**, and **white garments** so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and **eye salve** to anoint your eyes so that **you may see**. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, **I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me**. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to **sit down with Me on My throne**, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Rev. 3:18-21)	... lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will **spit you out of My mouth** ... **shame** of your **nakedness** will be **revealed** (Rev. 3:16, 18)	The city of Laodicea is no longer there. It now lies desolate because of its lack of a good source of water, as well as other factors. We know that Paul planned to visit nearby **Colossae** and spend some time there after he was released from imprisonment, but we do not know if he ever made it there. We know he attempted a fund-raising tour through the cities of Asia, and that "all those who were in Asia turned away from him." Somewhere during that trip through Asia, Paul was arrested and sent back to Rome for execution. This certainly does not look good for the seven churches of Asia.

Explanation of the Chart Above

As we study these two chapters of Revelation (2-3), we will discover quite a lot about the conditions of those seven churches at the time John wrote to them in late 62 AD. Most of them were struggling with moral, ethical, doctrinal, and spiritual weaknesses, as well as materialism, apathy, pride, and diminished love. None of them were totally aware of the danger looming on the horizon. They were ill-prepared for the challenge that the Neronic persecution would pose to their faith and endurance. Here in Revelation 2-3, Jesus pointed out their weak spots and the kind of threat that they would soon be facing, and then exhorted them to shape up while there was still time. This was written in late 62, two years before the Neronic persecution began in late 64. That was plenty of time to get their lives in order before the test. However, does subsequent history show that they heeded the warning, and survived until the Parousia?

The conditions of these churches that are mentioned here in Revelation, presuppose a pre-70 date for the book of Revelation. It mentions the strong presence of Jewish opponents in their cities, something which would NOT have been the case after AD 70. Josephus tells us that most of the Greek and Roman cities outside Palestine expelled their Jewish residents, or killed them and confiscated their property when the war in Judea began. Most of the Diaspora Jews fled back to Judea to participate in the war, where over a million of them were killed, and hundreds of thousands more sent into slavery, the mines, the galley ships, gladiatorial contests, or other purposes by their Roman captors. After AD 70 the Jews were no longer a majority in any of the Diaspora cities, nor in a position to persecute the church, especially at 95 AD when most futurists like to date the book of Revelation.

Furthermore, there is serious question from historians and archaeologists whether there was even a church in existence in Thyatira in 95 AD. As we noted on the chart, two heretics in the second century (Cerdon and Marcion) claimed that there was no church there in 95 AD when futurists think John wrote the Apocalypse. The only significant evidence we have is from **Papias**, who was supposedly the bishop of nearby Hierapolis in the early decades of the second century. We have noted in times past that he

claimed that Apostle John was killed by the Jews (supposedly before AD 70 when they had the power to do so). It is not known whether Papias was even a Christian yet in 95 AD. Same thing for **Polycarp** at Smyrna. These two guys pop up rather suddenly in the historical record with no background information to explain when and where and how they became Christians. Their writings show no awareness of an AD 70 Parousia, Resurrection, Rapture, or Judgment. Surely if they had met John or any of his disciples (as Irenaeus claims), they would have heard about the consummation of all things at the destruction of Jerusalem. Surely John would have explained how all of the things he had prophesied in the book of Revelation had come true. Those saints who had been alive at the time of the Parousia would have set the record straight with Papias and Polycarp, if any of them were still around after AD 70.

The historical conditions and archaeological evidence points almost exclusively toward a pre-70 date of the Apocalypse, soon after the Laodicea earthquake (in 60 AD), but before the Neronic persecution began (in 64 AD). Somewhere in the middle of that four year period, the book of Revelation was written. Two years after the Laodicean earthquake would have given them enough time to rebuild their city and be overly proud of it, deserving the rebuke that Christ gave to them. Plus, that would leave two years of warning and repentance time for the churches before the Neronic persecution descended upon them. All historical factors seem to be pointing right at late 62 as the date when the Apocalypse was composed and put into circulation.

Apostle Paul knew about these warnings to the seven churches, and so did Apostle Peter. That is why both of them wrote several epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, 1 Peter, 2 Peter) to those churches, and sent their fellow workers to them to stabilize them and brace them for the soon-coming Neronic persecution, which would cause so many Christians to fall away from the faith or be killed. Despite all of their diligent efforts to prepare the churches for this great tribulation, few of them remained faithful. Paul tells us that "all who are in Asia turned away" from him (2 Tim. 1:15). It does not sound like those churches in Asia heeded the warnings of John, Paul, and Peter. No wonder those churches disappeared from history after the Neronic persecution. Their lamps were snuffed out, just as Christ had threatened.

EPHESUS, SMYRNA, and PERGAMUM (the three west coast cities): Because these three cities were located on the west coast of Turkey, closest to Rome, they would have been the first ones to hear about the Neronic persecution and to feel its impact. If the news about the Neronic persecution first came by boat to the port cities of Ephesus and Smyrna, there would have been no time for escape. The Christians would have been rounded up and killed immediately without opportunity to flee. That may be why there is no mention here in Revelation of anyone in those three cities living and remaining until the Parousia. It only mentions **"overcomers"** (martyrs) in those three cities (**gold highlights**), implying that few (if any) would live and remain until the Parousia. However, Christians in the other four cities further inland might have had a better chance of being forewarned, and a few of them may have fled to safety. That may be why we see some of the faithful saints who **lived and remained** faithful until the Parousia being mentioned here in the letters to the other four cities (**green highlights**).

SMYRNA, THYATIRA, and PHILADELPHIA: In the case of these three cities, Jesus explicitly tells them what is actually going to happen to them during the upcoming tribulation. He is not as specific to the other four cities regarding what they were about to experience, but there was enough information given, which if it was heeded and followed, would have saved some of them from the worst part of the persecution and death. Unfortunately, it does not appear that very many of them heeded those warnings. For instance, to the church at **Smyrna**, Jesus told them that some of them were about to suffer imprisonment, tribulation, and death. They would have to endure ten days of tribulation. The church in **Thyatira** was told that Christ would throw Jezebel on a sick-bed and those who were associated with her into great tribulation. Her children would be killed with pestilence. Then Jesus told the saints at **Philadelphia** that He would make the Jews come and bow down at their feet, and would keep them from the hour of testing which was about to come ("quickly"). Note the mention of a synagogue and Jews there in Philadelphia at the time of writing, implying that the Jews were still a strong factor in that community at the time of writing. This points unmistakably to a pre-70 date.

SMYRNA: There was a considerable number of Jews living in Smyrna who took advantage of every opportunity to kill the Christians. For instance, when Polycarp was being killed by the Roman authorities in the middle of the second century, the Jews there in Smyrna broke their Sabbath in order to pile up the

wood for his burning at the stake. The Jews were most likely involved in using the Neronic persecution as an opportunity to eliminate all the Christians from Smyrna and all the other cities in Asia. Rev. 2:9 says that there was a synagogue there who were claiming to be true godly Jews, but were instead a synagogue of Satan. That fits a pre-70 timeframe very well when there was a strong Jewish community in Smyrna until the war broke out in Judea in AD 66.

PHILADELPHIA: Like Smyrna, Philadelphia evidently had a significant community of Jews living there who claimed to be true Jews, but were instead a synagogue of Satan. This again reflects conditions that were definitely appropriate to AD 62, but which would hardly have been possible in AD 95.

When looking at all the warnings to these seven literal churches in the seven cities of Asia, who were told that these tribulations and trials and persecutions were about to be unleashed upon them, we notice that there was no fulfillment shortly after AD 95. One looks in vain for a historical event which fulfilled all those dire pronouncements about "the hour of testing which was about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10-11). When did that happen shortly after AD 95? What event fulfilled that prediction literally? It is easy to see how this applies to AD 70, but there is nothing shortly after AD 95 to fulfill it. The late-daters and futurists totally ignore this problem.

Other Events At This Time (AD 62)

July 62 – Albinus arrived in Judea to begin his procuratorship (AD 62-64). Many of the Judean citizens complained to Albinus about what Ananus II had done: illegally convening a special session of the Sanhedrin to condemn James and others and put them to death or exile them without the approval and oversight of the Roman governor. Albinus and Agrippa II agreed that this illegal action could not be tolerated and immediately removed Ananus II from the High Priesthood. Albinus rounded up the Sicarii. Then the Sicarii took hostages to trade for their comrades that Albinus had imprisoned. **Eleazar b. Ananias** (scribe for the Temple governor) was one of the hostages taken by the Sicarii (Sept 62). Albinus was probably still the Roman governor (procurator) of Judea at the time when the Neronic persecution began (Summer 64). However, Gessius Florus came into Palestine not long after the Neronic persecution broke out (Fall 64). So it seems that Florus was probably the enforcer (or facilitator) of that persecution in Judea.

Jul 62 – Ananus II (son of Ananus b. Seth) was deposed from the High Priesthood by Agrippa II because of his lawless arrest and execution of James the Lord's brother.

Jul 62 – Jesus (son of Damnaeus) was appointed High Priest in place of Ananus II (son of Ananus b. Seth) by Agrippa II. He ruled for one year (AD 62-63). Not much is known about him other than the fact that he (like the two previous High Priests) sent his evil servants out to the threshing floors to seize all the tithes (which belonged to all the priests) to enrich himself. After he was deposed by Agrippa II, he did not go quietly away, but used his followers to insult the new high priest (Jesus b. Gamaliel), whose followers threw stones at each other in the streets of Jerusalem. It is also significant that Jesus b. Gamaliel was friends with Ananus II. This would further explain why Jesus b. Damnaeus was so bitter against Jesus b. Gamaliel. Ananus II may have had something to do with getting Jesus b. Damnaeus deposed and replaced by Jesus b. Gamaliel. There is some speculation that Jesus b. Gamaliel may have been a Pharisee (descendant of the famous Pharisee rabbis Hillel and Gamaliel), further explaining why there was so much political rivalry with Jesus b. Damnaeus who was probably a Sadducee [*Antiq*. 20:201-203 (20.9.1)].

July 62 – False Teachers were still held in check by the apostles, but as the apostles began to be killed, exiled, or imprisoned, the Gnostics, Judaizers, and other heretics took advantage of the situation to promote their own false teachings. Here in July of AD 62, James had just been killed. John was in exile on Patmos. Paul was in prison in Rome, and would soon be killed. And Peter would soon be arrested and killed also. So it is not surprising to hear from Eusebius and Hegesippus that the Gnostics and Judaizers and other heretics became very active after this. While the apostles were still alive and in circulation, those heresies had been mostly held in check. The Neronic persecution

eliminated most if not all of the remaining apostles and their fellow workers. The absence of the apostles made the great apostasy much worse, and emboldened the heretics to come out of the darkness to spread their heresies unopposed. Here is what Eusebius and Hegesippus said about this:

> **Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*:**
> **3Euseb. 32:7** In addition to these things the same man **[Hegesippus]**, while recounting the events of that period, records that **the Church up to that time had remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin**, since, if there were any that attempted to **corrupt the sound norm** of the preaching of salvation, they lay until then **concealed in obscure darkness**.
> **3Euseb. 32:8** But when the **sacred college of apostles had suffered death** in various forms, and the generation of those that had been deemed worthy to hear the inspired wisdom with their own ears had **passed away**, then the league of godless error took its rise as a result of the folly of heretical teachers, who, **because none of the apostles was still living, attempted henceforth, with a bold face, to proclaim, in opposition to the preaching of the truth, the 'knowledge which is falsely so-called' [i.e., Gnosticism].**
>
> **4Euseb. 22:4** The same author [**Hegesippus**] also describes the beginnings of the **heresies** which arose in his time, in the following words: "And after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as the Lord had also on the same account, **Symeon, the son of the Lord's uncle, Clopas**, was appointed the next bishop. All proposed him as second bishop because he was a **cousin of the Lord**." Therefore, they called the Church a virgin, for it was not yet corrupted by vain discourses.
> **4Euseb. 22:5** But **Thebuthis** [a rival of Symeon], because he was not made bishop, **began to corrupt it**. He also was sprung from the seven sects among the people, like Simon [Magus], from whom came the Simonians, and Cleobius, from whom came the Cleobians, and Dositheus, from whom came the Dositheans, and Gorthaeus, from whom came the Goratheni, and Masbotheus, from whom came the Masbothaeans. From them sprang the **Menandrianists**, and **Marcionists**, and **Carpocratians**, and **Valentinians**, and **Basilidians**, and **Saturnilians**. Each introduced privately and separately his own peculiar opinion.

July 62 – Simeon b. Clopas was appointed bishop of the Judaizing branch of the Jerusalem church in place of James (the Lord's brother) who was killed by Ananus II [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist*. 3.11.2; 3.22.1; 3.32.1-6]. **Eusebius** (4th century) depends on **Hegesippus** (2nd century) for this story. Since Eusebius has a tendency to inflate ecclesiastical power structures in order to justify Rome's papal system, this story is suspect on that account alone. There may be a kernel of truth in it, but there are several things that need more clarification. Was James actually the head bishop of the whole Jerusalem church, or merely the Judaizing faction within the Jerusalem church? Was he one of the elders/bishops in the whole Jerusalem church? What about Peter and John? Did James have authority above Peter, or vice versa, or neither? Tradition says that Simeon's appointment as bishop did not occur until sometime after AD 70. However, it is not likely that they would have waited that long, eleven years or more from AD 62 until AD 73, to replace James. These are just a few of the questions that are raised by this story. Here are a few more:

Who was this Simeon son of Clopas? Why were the family relatives of Jesus held in such high esteem, and put into such positions of rulership? Was that appropriate, and was it following the teaching of Jesus and His apostles? Where did Jesus or the apostles (or Scripture) ever teach such an ecclesiastical arrangement with close family relatives of Jesus installed as monarchial bishops of the church? This type of leadership arrangement was very much like a *caliphate* (as noted in the article on Simon in the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, by Angelo Di Berardino, gen. ed.). Was this an innovation of the Judaizing faction (Ebionite and Nazarean sects) in Jerusalem after the death of James, their champion? Was this their attempt to gain control over the whole church in order to exclude the Gentiles?

It is clear from some of the later church fathers (e.g., Epiphanius) that some of the Ebionites and Nazareans envisioned the coming Eternal Kingdom as an earthly worldwide reign of Jesus Himself or his fleshly relatives sitting on a literal throne in a rebuilt Jerusalem, like King David had done before (i.e., a dynasty or caliphate). Was this setting a precedent for the pope in Rome? Was the story misplaced in a wrong historical setting and misconstrued by Hegesippus or Eusebius? Did the Eastern and Western church fathers both use this story as support for their episcopalian form of church government? These are only a few of the questions that cast a cloud of suspicion over this story.

Eusebius says that Simeon was the "cousin" of Jesus, since Joseph and Clopas were brothers [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* 3.11.2]. However, that does not make him a blood relative of Jesus, since Joseph was not the true genetic father of Jesus. Connecting Joseph and his family to the leadership of the church was questionable, especially if it implied that Jesus was not virgin-born and that Joseph was his real father, which is exactly what some of the Ebionites and Nazareans taught. Epiphanius and others have shown that some of the Judaizing sects (e.g., Ebionites and Nazareans) denied the virgin birth and considered Joseph the real father of Jesus. Their rejection of the virgin birth means that they also rejected the Deity of Christ.

Eusebius gives a list of supposedly fifteen "bishops of the circumcision" in Jerusalem until the time of Hadrian [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist*. 4.5.3]. His account assumes an unbroken succession of bishops in Jerusalem throughout the whole period from AD 62 to the war of Hadrian in AD 132 (seventy years). That story is more than a little suspect for several reasons, as well as self-serving for both the Eastern, Western, and Coptic Church hierarchies. Many Protestant scholars have rightfully questioned the veracity and significance of these lists of bishops.

The Olivet Discourse and other historical accounts imply that there was no church in Jerusalem after the Neronic persecution decimated it in AD 64-65. Josephus does not mention any Christians being in Jerusalem during the war with Rome (AD 66-70), nor afterwards. Not even the pro-Roman Pharisees under the leadership of Yochanan b. Zakkai and Simon b. Gamaliel were allowed to rebuild their community in Jerusalem after the war. They were sent to Yavneh instead. There is not much chance that any Judaizing Christians would have been allowed back in Jerusalem any time soon after the war, especially if they believed that a physical descendant of David was going to come soon and establish a physical worldwide empire ruling out of Jerusalem. That is exactly what those Ebionites and Nazareans believed. Some Gentile Christians might have been allowed back in Jerusalem after Masada fell in AD 73, but there is no indication that there were any true Christians in existence anywhere in Judea until a couple decades after AD 70. The heretical Judaizing sects of Ebionites and Nazareans fled to Pella and other safe regions outside Judea and Galilee, where they virtually disappeared by the end of the second century. Eusebius refers to them as being the "circumcision" (Judaizer) party, implying that they were the Ebionites and Nazareans who not only denied the virgin birth of Christ and forced circumcision on Gentile converts, but also taught that Christ would return in the flesh and sit on a physical throne in Jerusalem. That latter idea may explain why they set up a fleshly relative of Jesus as bishop over their churches to occupy the throne until Jesus arrived. That certainly does not recommend the practice of setting up a single bishop over any church, but unfortunately it is exactly how Eusebius used that Judaizer practice as a precedent to justify the mono-episcopal system among the Gentile churches. The apostles instead taught and followed the pattern of a plurality of elders (or bishops) in each local church (see Acts 14:23; 1 Cor 4:17).

It also appears that these Judaizers misinterpreted the teaching of Jesus about His Kingdom, and misunderstood the nature of the Kingdom in regard to circumcision and law-keeping. They believed Christ would return to sit on a physical throne in Jerusalem, destroy the Romans, and set up his own world-wide empire. They continued requiring circumcision and law-keeping after AD 70, showing that they were not true Christians, and totally misunderstood what Jesus meant about keeping the jots and tittles only until heaven and earth passed away (in AD 70). Apostle Paul noted in Galatians that the Judaizers (the party of circumcision) were under a curse, and had cut themselves off from Christ by requiring Gentiles to be circumcised. It was "another gospel" and not the true gospel. Such Judaizers were not true Christians. Even the Jewish historians like Graetz describe them as "half Jewish and half-Christian" (i.e., not true Jews or Christians, but an untenable mixture).

This does not recommend their practice of setting up fleshly relatives of Jesus as monarchial bishops over their Judaizing churches. Instead, it discredits the practice, and raises real questions about the motives and integrity of Eusebius in his ecclesiological statements. It could very well be that Eusebius has given us a warped view of things here, and white-washed the Judaizing practice of setting up a single bishop (episcopos) over their church in order to justify that same papal practice among the Gentiles churches, and in Rome particularly.

There is no evidence that the church existed in Jerusalem during the war with Rome, nor afterwards for several years. The first clear testimony we have about there being a Jewish church back in Jerusalem is by Aquila in the second century (circa AD 129) just before the Bar Kochba revolt. Van Houwelingen reviewed the statements of Epiphanius about this:

Epiphanius mentions the return of the Christians to Jerusalem in connection with the visit which Aquila, the author of an authoritative Greek translation of the Bible, brought to Jerusalem in the second century. He met a group of Christians. How did they come to be there? They had returned from Pella to Jerusalem, according to Epiphanius.**[fn 22]**

Epiphanius mentions that gatherings were held in Jerusalem in the same house where the disciples had been together between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost; this house was namely not destroyed, just as various other blocks of houses at the hill of Sion and seven synagogues were not.**[fn 23]**

Eusebius wants to communicate a message. He does not describe in detail what happened on the flight of the Christians to Pella; he does not specify any concrete circumstances surrounding the trip; he says nothing about the difficulties which went along with it; he limits himself exclusively to the schematic pattern of flight-rescue-destruction. No leader of the congregation is named. The only concrete name that Eusebius mentions is the name of a place, the city Pella. But Pella is not mentioned again in the *Ecclesiastical History.* Eusebius has thus made up this name to give his story the appearance of believability.

Pella (named after the birthplace of Alexander the Great) was a center of Hellenistic culture. Is it probable that people of Jewish descent would seek refuge in such pagan surroundings? Furthermore, Pella, along with other places in the Decapolis, was attacked by furious Jews in A.D. 66 as retribution for the enormous bloodbath which had been perpetrated against the Jews of Caesarea at the outbreak of the uprising. In this case the fleeing Christians would not have been the victims of the Romans, but of the embittered freedom-fighters. And if they came later, then they could not have counted on a friendly reception from the local population. [H. Mulder, *De verwoesting van Jeruzalem en haar gevolgen* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1972), pp. 85–86.]

Footnote 22: Epiphanius, *Weights and Measures,* 14–15. H. Koester, "Origin and Significance," 96-97, dates the visit of Aquila to Jerusalem in the year A.D. 129. See also B. C. Gray, "The Movements of the Jerusalem Church During the First Jewish War," *JEH* 24 (1973): 1-7. According to Pixner, the Jewish Christians who returned had built an "apostolic synagogue" on the foundations of this house, including the use of enormous stones which probably came from the destroyed temple complex (B. Pixner, *Wege des Messias und Stätten der Urkirche* [ed. Rainer Riesner; Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1991], 287–326).

Footnote 23: The Christians whom Aquila met in Jerusalem were called by Epiphanius, "disciples of the disciples of the apostles." They were, as it were, the grandchildren of the mother-church under James. The previous generation had returned to Jerusalem from Pella.

For more information about Jewish Christianity in Palestine and the flight to Pella, see the following: S. Sowers, "The Circumstances and Recollection of the Pella Flight," *TZ* 26 (1970): 305-20, esp. 309–10; R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1988), 125–26. See about early Christianity in Transjordan: B. van Elderen, "Early Christianity in Transjordan," *TynBul* 45, no. 1 (1994): 97-117.

[P. H. R. Van Houwelingen. "Fleeing Forward: The Departure of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65:2 (Fall 2003) p. 182.]

If the Jewish Christians did return to Jerusalem from Pella, it would have been a very small fraction of what it had been before the war, and most likely composed of heretical Ebionites and Nazarenes from Pella who denied the Deity of Christ and still required law-keeping. The Romans who occupied Jerusalem after the war would probably not have tolerated any Judaizers in the city (Christians or otherwise). It would have been deadly dangerous for Judaizing Christians to attempt to rebuild their community there in Jerusalem at a time when even the Pharisees were not allowed to do that. The Pharisees had to retreat to Yavneh to have their own safe community. Hegesippus, from whom Eusebius was getting this tradition, supposedly was a Hebrew Christian who came from one of the Palestinian Judaizing sects like the Ebionites and Nazarenes (Euseb. *Eccl. Hist*. 4.22.1-8). That diminishes the value of Eusebius somewhat, wherever he was using Judaizing sources. And this is not a big surprise, since there is good evidence that Eusebius leaned toward Arianism (Unitarianism), which the Ebionites and Nazaraeans agreed with.

It also seems from Eusebius that the Alexandrian "Christians" followed a similar mono-episcopal pattern (only one bishop) over their churches, and viewed Christianity through Gnostic/Greek philosophical glasses. Yet, Eusebius had no problem using their aberrant one-bishop leadership pattern as justification for the Roman papal system. This raises serious ecclesiological, Christological, and soteriological questions about Eusebius and some of his sources.

There are two biblical texts which seem to mention *Clopas*, the father of **Simeon b. Clopas**. Each of them spell the name a little differently, even though they might be referring to the same person. One has the full spelling of the name (Cleopas), while the other has a shortened nickname (Clopas):

Luke 24:18 One of them, named **Cleopas** [Gk. KLEOPAS], answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?"
John 19:25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of **Clopas** [Gk. KLOPA], and Mary Magdalene.

As Lightfoot and others have noted (see below), the accounts of Eusebius and Hegesippus are probably confused and unreliable. It appears that Simeon was made bishop of the Judaizing branch of the Jewish Christians (Ebionites and Nazaraeans), and not the bishop for the whole Judean Church. And that appointment appears to have been made soon after the death of James (AD 62), probably in July 62 right after Ananus II was deposed from the High Priesthood for his lawless killing of James. Furthermore, it seems that Simeon was the one who led the Judaizing faction in Pella after they fled from Judea. Eusebius seems to indicate that the retreat to Pella occurred "before the war" (AD 66), and probably also before the Neronic persecution (AD 64). As some have noted (e.g., Houwelingen), the flight to Pella was not a totally safe one. Josephus mentions the fact that residents of Pella were attacked first by the Zealots [*War* 2.458 (2.18.1)], and then later by the Romans during the war [*War* 4.413-450 (4.7.3 – 4.8.1)]. So it would have been safer for them to flee further northeast into the region protected by Agrippa II [*War* 2.247 (2.12.8)], or to Antioch of Syria.

Below are the actual statements of Hegesippus about **Simeon b. Clopas** as recorded by Eusebius. Notice the sequence of events mentioned here: (1) James was killed (AD 62), (2) Simeon was appointed as the successor of James (AD 62), (3) The Romans did a search for descendants of David to eliminate them, (4) A persecution broke out in which Simeon was killed (AD 64). All of this could easily have occurred during the two-plus years from the arrest of James (Apr 62) until the Neronic persecution (Fall of 64). It is quite possible that Hegesippus or Eusebius or both were confused about the time when these events occurred:

Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*:
3Euseb. 11:1 After the **martyrdom of James** and the conquest of Jerusalem which immediately followed, it is said that those of the apostles and disciples of the Lord that were still living came together from all directions with those that were related to the Lord according to the flesh (for the majority of them also were still alive) to take counsel as to who was worthy to succeed James.
3Euseb. 11:2 They all with one consent pronounced **Symeon, the son of Clopas**, of whom the Gospel also makes mention; to be worthy of the episcopal throne of that parish. He was a cousin, as they say, of the Savior. For **Hegesippus** records that **Clopas was a brother of Joseph**.
3Euseb. 12:1 He also relates that Vespasian after the conquest of Jerusalem gave orders that all that belonged to the lineage of David should be sought out, in order that none of the royal race might be left among the Jews; and in consequence of this a most terrible persecution again hung over the Jews.

3Euseb. 32:1 It is reported that after the age of Nero and Domitian, under the emperor whose times we are now recording, a persecution was stirred up against us in certain cities in consequence of a popular uprising. In this persecution we have understood that **Symeon, the son of Clopas**, who, as we have shown, was the second bishop of the church of Jerusalem, suffered martyrdom.
3Euseb. 32:2 Hegesippus, whose words we have already quoted in various places, is a witness to this fact also. Speaking of certain heretics he adds that **Symeon** was accused by them at this time; and since it was clear that he was a Christian, he was tortured in various ways for many days, and

astonished even the judge himself and his attendants in the highest degree, and finally he suffered a death similar to that of our Lord.
3Euseb. 32:3 But there is nothing like hearing **the historian** himself, who writes as follows: "Certain of these heretics brought accusation against **Symeon, the son of Clopas**, on the ground that he was a descendant of David and a Christian; and thus he suffered martyrdom, at the age of one hundred and twenty years, while Trajan was emperor and Atticus governor."
3Euseb. 32:4 And **the same writer** says that his accusers also, when search was made for the descendants of David, were arrested as belonging to that family. And it might be reasonably assumed that **Symeon** was one of those that saw and heard the Lord, judging from the length of his life, and from the fact that the Gospel makes mention of **Mary, the wife of Clopas**, who was the **father of Symeon**, as has been already shown.
3Euseb. 32:5 The **same historian** says that there were also others, descended from one of the so-called brothers of the Savior, whose name was **Judas**, who, after they had borne testimony before Domitian, as has been already recorded, in behalf of faith in Christ, lived until the same reign. He writes as follows:
3Euseb. 32:6 "They came, therefore, and took the lead of every church as witnesses and as relatives of the Lord. And profound peace being established in every church, they remained until the reign of the Emperor Trajan, and until the above-mentioned **Symeon, son of Clopas**, an **uncle of the Lord**, was informed against by the heretics, and was himself in like manner accused for the same cause before **the governor Atticus**. And after being tortured for many days he suffered martyrdom, and all, including even the proconsul, marveled that, at the **age of one hundred and twenty years**, he could endure so much. And orders were given that he should be crucified."
3Euseb. 32:7 In addition to these things the same man, while recounting the events of that period, records that **the Church up to that time had remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin**, since, if there were any that attempted to **corrupt the sound norm** of the preaching of salvation, they lay until then **concealed in obscure darkness**.
3Euseb. 32:8 But when the **sacred college of apostles had suffered death** in various forms, and the generation of those that had been deemed worthy to hear the inspired wisdom with their own ears had **passed away**, then the league of godless error took its rise as a result of the folly of heretical teachers, who, **because none of the apostles was still living, attempted henceforth, with a bold face, to proclaim, in opposition to the preaching of the truth, the 'knowledge which is falsely so-called.'**
3Euseb. 33:1 So great a **persecution was at that time** opened against us in many places that Plinius Secundus, one of the most noted of governors, being disturbed by the great number of martyrs, communicated with the emperor concerning the multitude of those that were put to death for their faith. At the same time, he informed him in his communication that he had not heard of their doing anything profane or contrary to the laws, — except that they arose at dawn and sang hymns to Christ as a God; but that they renounced adultery and murder and like criminal offenses, and did all things in accordance with the laws.
3Euseb. 33:2 In reply to this Trajan made the following decree: that the **race of Christians should not be sought after**, but when found should be punished. On account of this the persecution which had threatened to be a most terrible one was to a certain degree checked, but there were still left plenty of pretexts for those who wished to do us harm. Sometimes the people, sometimes the rulers in various places, would lay plots against us, so that, although no great persecutions took place, local persecutions were nevertheless going on in particular provinces, and many of the faithful endured martyrdom in various forms.

4Euseb. 22:4 The same author [**Hegesippus**] also describes the beginnings of the heresies which arose in his time, in the following words: "And after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as the Lord had also on the same account, **Symeon, the son of the Lord's uncle, Clopas**, was appointed the next bishop. All proposed him as second bishop because he was a **cousin of the Lord**. "Therefore, they called the Church a virgin, for it was not yet corrupted by vain discourses.
4Euseb. 22:5 But **Thebuthis** [a rival of Symeon], because he was not made bishop, **began to corrupt it**. He also was sprung from the seven sects among the people, like Simon [Magus], from whom came the Simonians, and Cleobius, from whom came the Cleobians, and Dositheus, from whom came the Dositheans, and Gorthaeus, from whom came the Goratheni, and Masbotheus,

from whom came the Masbothaeans. From them sprang the **Menandrianists**, and **Marcionists**, and **Carpocratians**, and **Valentinians**, and **Basilidians**, and **Saturnilians**. Each introduced privately and separately his own peculiar opinion.

Here is what some of the various Christian dictionaries, encyclopedias and commentaries have to say about Simeon b. Clopas and his father Clopas:

Encyclopedia of Early Christianity **(Second Edition) by Everett Ferguson**

After AD 70, Jewish Christianity would be located in many of the Galilean and Transjordanian villages and cities. In Galilee, the villages of Kokaba and Nazara are named as Jewish Christian centers; in the Transjordan, Pella, Beroea, Basanitis, Nabatea, Paneas, Moabitis, and Adraoi are given as specific locations. In the fourth century, a group is also found on the island of Cyprus.

At the beginning of the Jewish war against Rome in AD 66, Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and perhaps also in Galilee escaped to Pella in Perea (Euseb. *HE* 3.5.3), impelled "by a revelation." This pivotal event, denied as historical by some scholars, situated the Jewish Christians for the most part in the Transjordan for the remainder of their history.

Certain of the Jewish Christian communities revered Peter, who is described in the Pseudo-Clementine literature as one who kept the ritual laws of Judaism. Other communities revered James, the brother of Jesus, martyred in AD 62. Evidently his family relationship to Jesus, as well as his devotion to Torah, were the principal reasons for his veneration. Other members of Jesus' family succeeded James in the leadership of the Jerusalem Christian community – Simon bar Clopus, a cousin (Euseb. *HE* 3.11.1) or uncle (Euseb. *HE* 3.32.6), and Justus, who may have been a relative, who succeeded Simon.

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70, Christians were excluded from participation in synagogues, and sometime later the curse against heretics used in synagogue worship was formulated. This was directed principally toward Jewish Christians. ... Jewish Christianity in this situation probably began to use and adapt the traditions of the Gospel of Matthew ... for worship and catechetical purposes. The patristic accounts, however, seem to indicate that the Matthew used by Jewish Christianity was in the "Hebrew" language. This may have been a retroversion of canonical Matthew, which almost certainly was originally written in Greek. Apparently, Matthew was used instead of other Gospels that may have been available due to its Jewish perspective.

With the beginning of the second century, the heretical and schismatic era of Jewish Christianity began. In the tenth year of Trajan's reign (107), Simon bar Clopus, perhaps the final relative of Jesus, was martyred, reputedly at the age of 120 (Euseb. *HE* 3.32.3). No longer would there be eyewitnesses who could correct the traditions circulated about Jesus. In 135, the Bar Kochba rebellion was quelled by the Romans, which marked the end of Jewish Christianity in Jerusalem. For the next 300 years, according to patristic records, Jewish Christianity would exist in the Transjordanian territories and then fade out of historical record....

Some of the heretical Jewish Christian groups became syncretistic in their beliefs, combining traditional Jewish customs and practices with Gnostic beliefs and exotic religious notions. The Elkesaites were one such group; they blended elements of Judaism, Gnosticism, magic, and astrology (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.8-12; 10.25). That these groups should disappear is not surprising, since they did not fit either into post-temple Judaism or into the emerging Catholic church with its concerns for orthodoxy. [From the article: "Jewish Christianity" written by Glenn A. Koch. Found in the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, edited by Everett Ferguson. Published by Routledge, an imprint of Taylor and Francis Group in New York and London. p. 615]

Author Comment: It is worth noting that some of those Jewish Christians (Elkesaites?) migrated down into Arabia and eventually had some influence on Muhammad. It was their rejection of the virgin birth and Deity of Christ which evidently swayed the founder of Islam to adopt a similar view of Jesus. To this day, evangelists for Islam follow that same anti-Pauline and anti-Deity of Jesus approach.

Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity **(Di Berardino, Oden, Elowsky, Hoover)**

Under [Symeon's] episcopate, the community of Jerusalem fled to Pella. His election emphasizes the tendency at that time to give utmost importance to blood ties in the Jewish-Christian community. From the writings of Hegesippus we know that the emperor Vespasian (Euseb. *HE* 3.12) and also

Domitian (Euseb. *HE* 3.20.1-6) had their men search for the descendants of David. [Article: "Simeon of Jerusalem" written by G. Ladocsi and S. Samulowitz. Found in the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, Edited by Berardino, Oden, Elowsky, and Hoover. Published in the USA by IVP Academic and Intervarsity Press in Downers Grove, Illinois]

Dictionary of Early Christian Biography **(Henry Wace)**

Simeon (1), 2nd bishop of Jerusalem, succeeding James, the Lord's brother. According to the statement of Hegesippus preserved by Eusebius, Simeon was the **son of Clopas** "mentioned in Holy Scripture" (John 19:25) [as being] the **brother of Joseph**, and therefore, legally, the uncle of our Lord, while **Simeon** himself ... was legally **his cousin** ... and of the royal line of David (Eus. *H. E.* iii. 11, 32; iv. 22). The language of Hegesippus (Eus. *H. E.* iv. 22) evidently distinguishes between the relationship of James and Simeon to our Lord. Dr. Mill, however, follows Burton (*H. E.* i. 290) in regarding Simeon as a brother of James and also of Jude, though perhaps by another mother (Mill, *Pantheistic Principles,* pp. 234, 253). Such an interpretation of Hegesippus's language is **very unnatural and at variance with the statement of Epiphanius that Simeon was the cousin** (Gk. ANEPHIOS) of James the Just (Epiph. *Haer.* lxxvii. c. 14, p. 1046; cf. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 262). **Bishop Lightfoot regards his age as "an exaggeration," and suggests that his being "a son of Cleopas mentioned in the Evangelical records [Lk 24:18] "requires us to place his death earlier than the generally received date.** According to Hegesippus, Simeon was unanimously chosen to fill the vacant see of Jerusalem on the violent death of James the Just, **the date usually assigned for which being 62 or 63** (see Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 9. 1). Whether **the appointment of Simeon immediately succeeded** or was not made till the retirement of the Christian Jews to Pella cannot be determined. The former seems rather more probable. His retreat at Pella would save him from the inquisition after descendants of the royal line of David, made by Vespasian, according to Eusebius (*H. E.* iii. 12), as well as the later inquiry instituted by Domitian (*H. E.* iii. 19, 20). He must have returned with the Christians to Jerusalem when allowed to do so by the Roman authorities. Of his episcopate we know nothing. He was martyred in the reign of Trajan (Gk. EPI TRAIANOU, Eus. *H. E.* iii. 32), but **the exact date is uncertain**. By a misinterpretation of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius, which seemed to assign his martyrdom with that of Ignatius to the 9th or 10th year of Trajan, Simeon's death has been assigned to 107 or 108. Bishop Lightfoot has shown good reason for **placing it earlier** in Trajan's reign (Lightfoot, *Ignatius*, i. 21, 58–60, ii. 442–450). Hegesippus says that in his 121st year **Simeon was accused before Atticus, then proconsul, by certain Jewish sectaries, first, that being of the line of David, he was a possible claimant of the throne of his royal ancestor, and secondly that he was a Christian.** He was tortured for many days in succession, and bore his sufferings with a firmness which astonished all the beholders, especially Atticus himself, who marveled at such endurance in one so advanced in age. Finally he was ordered to be crucified (Eus. *H. E.* iii. 32). [Rev. Canon E. Venables wrote this article on "Simeon" in: *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*. p. 904. Henry Wace, Gen. Ed. Public Domain. Hypertexted and formatted for the *Accordance* Bible Search program by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 1.1. boldface added]

More Information about Clopas, Symeon, Joseph and Mary

Smith's Bible Dictionary (William Smith)

Cleopas (of a renowned father), one of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection (**Luke 24:18**). Some think the same as Cleophas in John 19:25. But they are probably two different persons. Cleopas is a Greek name, contracted from Cleopater, while Cleophas, or Clopas as in the Revised Version, is an Aramaic name, the same as Alphaeus.

Cleophas, Revised Version Clo'pas, the husband of Mary the sister of Virgin Mary. (**John 19:25**) He was probably dead before Jesus' ministry began, for his wife and children constantly appear with Joseph's family in the time of our Lord's ministry. [William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 1889. Public Domain. Electronic Text Downloaded from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library. http://www.ccel.org Formatted and corrected by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 1.4]

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (James Orr)

Clopas; Cleophas (Gk. KLOPAS): The former in RV, the latter in AV, of **Jn 19:25**, for the name of the husband of one of the women who stood by the cross of Christ. Upon the philological ground of a variety in pronunciation of the Hebrew root, [it is] sometimes identified with Alpheus, the father of James the

Less. Said by tradition to have been the brother of Joseph, the husband of Mary... Distinguished from Cleopas, a Greek word, while Clopas is Aramaic. [James Orr, Gen. Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1915 edition. Parts of the electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc., Version 2.2]

Expositor's Bible Commentary

John 19:25-27 The harsh brutality of the scene is softened by the allusion to Jesus' care for his mother. Four women are mentioned here: Mary, the wife of Clopas; Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and his mother's sister, who was presumably Salome, the mother of James and John (cf. Matt 27:56; Mark 10:35; 15:40). **The identity of Mary of Clopas is uncertain. She may have been the wife or daughter of Clopas. If she were the former, a question arises whether Clopas and Alphaeus, who was the father of James the younger (Mark 3:18), were identical.** Most of these women were related in some way to the Twelve and were among Jesus' most loyal followers. Mary of Magdala appears in Luke's list of those who helped support Jesus by their contributions (Luke 8:2). There is nothing in the NT to imply that she was of loose moral character. "Magdalene" refers to her home in Magdala, a town on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, named probably from the Hebrew migdol, or "watchtower." [Merrill C. Tenney, *John* (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary.* Vol. 9; ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 1.7]

Adam Clarke's Commentary

John 19:25. *Mary the wife of Cleophas*. She is said, in Matthew 27:56, (see the note there,) and Mark 15:40, to have been the mother of James the Less, and of Joses; and this James her son is said, in Matt. 10:3, to have been the son of Alpheus; hence it seems that Alpheus and Cleopas were the same person. To which may be added, that Hegesippus is quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*. l.; iii.; c. 11, as saying that Cleopas was the brother of Joseph, the husband of the virgin. Theophylact says that Cleopas, (brother of Joseph, the husband of the virgin,) having died childless, his brother Joseph married his widow, by whom he had four sons, called by the evangelists the brothers of our Lord, and two daughters, the one named Salome, the other Mary, the daughter of Cleopas, because she was his daughter according to law, though she was the daughter of Joseph according to nature. There are several conjectures equally well founded with this last to be met with in the ancient commentators; but, in many cases, it is very difficult to distinguish the different Marys mentioned by the evangelists.

Easton's Bible Dictionary (M. G. Easton)

Alphaeus: (1) The father of James the Less, the apostle and writer of the epistle (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13), and the husband of Mary (John 19:25). The Hebrew form of this name is Cleopas, or Clopas (q.v.). (2) The father of Levi, or Matthew (Mark 2:14).

Brother: ... Brethren of Jesus (Matt. 1:25; 12:46, 50: Mark 3:31, 32; Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 9:5, etc.) were probably the younger children of Joseph and Mary. Some have supposed that they may have been the children of Joseph by a former marriage, and others that they were the children of Mary, the Virgin's sister, and wife of Cleophas. The first interpretation, however, is the most natural.

Cleopas: (abbreviation of Cleopatros), one of the two disciples with whom Jesus conversed on the way to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection (Luke 24:18). We know nothing definitely regarding him. It is not certain that he was the Clopas of John 19:25, or the **Alphaeus** of Matt. 10:3, although he may have been so.

Cleophas: (in the spelling of this word "h" is inserted by mistake from Latin MSS.), rather Cleopas, which is the Greek form of the word, while Clopas is the Aramaic form. In John 19:25 the Authorized Version reads, "Mary, the wife of Clopas." **The word "wife" is conjecturally inserted here.** If "wife" is rightly inserted, then Mary was the mother of James the Less, and Clopas is the same as **Alphaeus** (Matt. 10:3; 27:56).

James: The son of Alphaeus, or Cleopas, "the brother" or near kinsman or cousin of our Lord (Gal. 1:18, 19), called James "the Less," or "the Little," probably because he was of low stature. He is mentioned along with the other apostles (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). He had a separate interview with our Lord after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7), and is mentioned as one of the apostles of the circumcision (Acts 1:13). He appears to have occupied the position of head of the Church at Jerusalem, where he presided at the council held to consider the case of the Gentiles (Acts 12:17; 15:13-29: 21:18-24). This James was the author of the epistle which bears his name.

Mary: the wife of Cleopas is mentioned (John 19:25) as standing at the cross in company with Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus. By comparing Matt. 27:56 and Mark 15:40, we find that this Mary and "Mary the mother of James the little" are one and the same person, and that she was the sister of our Lord's mother. She was that "other Mary" who was present with Mary of Magdala at the burial of our Lord (Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47); and she was one of those who went early in the morning of the first day of the week to anoint the body, and thus became one of the first witnesses of the resurrection (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1).

Mary: the mother of John Mark was one of the earliest of our Lord's disciples. **She was the sister of Barnabas** (Col. 4:10), and joined with him in disposing of their land and giving the proceeds of the sale into the treasury of the Church (Acts 4:37; 12:12). Her house in Jerusalem was the common meeting-place for the disciples there.

[M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Third Edition, published by Thomas Nelson, 1897. Electronic text downloaded from the Bible Foundation e-Text Library: http://www.bf.org/bfetexts.htm Hypertexted and formatted by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 3.2]

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS)

The assumption of the early church's tradition, mentioned by *Hegesippus* (cited by *EUSEBIUS*), is that **Cleopas is Clopas, brother of Joseph, making Cleopas the uncle of Jesus, and that the unnamed Emmaus disciple is Cleopas's son Simeon, later the second bishop of Jerusalem, the leader of the Jerusalem church after 70**. [Arthur A. Just and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *Luke* (*ACCS* 3; ICCS/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), Vol. 3 p. 377] [Comment from Ed: Origen (ca. 185-251) agreed with this tradition that the two men referred to here in Luke 24:18 were Cleopas and his son Simon (FC 80:44). And Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 375-444) said that Simon b. Cleopas was one of the seventy disciples (CGSL 616).]

History of the Christian Church (Philip Schaff)

Hegesippus *apud* Euseb. *H. E.* III., 11, 22, 32; IV., 5, 22. *Const. Apost.* VII. 46. Hegesippus assumes that Clopas, the father of **Symeon**, was a brother of Joseph and an uncle of Jesus. He never calls **Symeon** "brother of the Lord," but only James and Jude (II. 23; III. 20).

Jesus b. Ananus – "Woe, Woe, to Jerusalem" (Late 62)

Sep-Oct 62 – Sicarii activity began to escalate. After Albinus the Procurator had rounded up and imprisoned some of the Sicarii, the other Sicarii then took hostages to trade for their comrades that Albinus had imprisoned. One of those who were taken hostage by the Sicarii was **Eleazar b. Ananias** (son of Ananias b. Nedebaeus, and scribe of the Temple governor), who was captured by the Sicarii at the Feast of Booths (Sept 62). [*Antiq*. 20:208 (20.9.3)]

Sep-Oct 62 – Jesus b. Ananus began crying out "**Woe, Woe to Jerusalem!**" Four years before the war began, at the Feast of Booths (Sept-Oct in AD 62), this commoner, a farmer, suddenly began crying out these words of woe against Jerusalem and the whole Jewish people. Here is what Josephus said about it:

> **War 6:300** (6.5.3) ...But, what is still more terrible there was one **Jesus, the son of Ananus**, a plebeian and a **husbandman**, who, **four years before the war began [i.e., AD 62]**, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple,
> **War 6:301** (6.5.3) began on a sudden cry aloud, *"A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!"* This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city.
> **War 6:302** (6.5.3) However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before.

War 6:303 (6.5.3) Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of **divine fury in the man**, brought him to the Roman procurator;
War 6:304 (6.5.3) where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, ***"Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"***
War 6:305 (6.5.3) And when **Albinus** (for he was then our procurator) asked him who he was, and whence he came, and why he uttered such words; he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off **his melancholy ditty**, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him.
War 6:306 (6.5.3) Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, **"Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!"**
War 6:307 (6.5.3) Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a **melancholy presage of what was to come**.
War 6:308 (6.5.3) This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that **he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege**, when it ceased;
War 6:309 (6.5.3) for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, **"Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!"** And just as he added at the last, **"Woe, woe, to myself also!"** there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.

This sounds very much like the woes mentioned in the book of Revelation (Rev 8:13, cf. Rev. 18:10-19). Notice the similarities boldfaced below:

Rev. 8:13 And I saw, and I heard one messenger, flying in the mid-heaven, saying with a great voice, **'Woe, woe, woe, to those dwelling upon the land** from the rest of the voices of the trumpet of the three messengers who are about to sound.' [YLT]

Rev. 18:10 from afar having stood because of the fear of her torment, saying, **Woe, woe, the great city Babylon**, the strong city, because in one hour did come thy judgment. [YLT]

Rev. 18:16 and saying, **Woe, woe, the great city**, that was arrayed with fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and gilded in gold, and precious stone, and pearls — because in one hour so much riches were made waste! [YLT]

Rev. 18:19 and they did cast dust upon their heads, and were crying out, weeping and sorrowing, saying, **Woe, woe, the great city!** in which were made rich all having ships in the sea, out of her costliness — for in one hour was she made waste. [YLT]

If the book of Revelation had been written and was in circulation by this time, it would surely have made a lot of sense to the Jewish Christians who were present for that Feast of Booths and heard Jesus the Farmer pronounce those woes. They would have recognized the similarities with the statements of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24), as well as with the woes pronounced in the book of Revelation (Rev 8:13, cf. Rev. 18:10-19), and would have seen this as a signal to get out of Jerusalem right then (AD 62). Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. 3.5.3) says that the saints were indeed warned "before the war" (which began in AD 66) to get out of Jerusalem:

3Euseb. 5:3 But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a **revelation**, vouchsafed to approved men there **before the war**, to **leave the city** and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called **Pella**. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.

It is important to note here that both Apostles John and Paul (Rev. 18:4, and Heb. 13:13-14) warned them to get out of Jerusalem before the "Great Tribulation" (Neronic persecution in AD 64). Quoted below are their warnings to get out of Jerusalem:

> **Rev. 18:4** And I heard another voice out of the heaven, saying, '*Come forth out of her, My people*, that ye may not partake with her sins, and that ye may not receive of her plagues,
>
> **Heb. 13:13-14** So, let us *go out to Him outside the camp*, bearing His reproach. For *here we do not have a lasting city*, but we are *seeking the one about to be*.

We noted also that Peter in his first epistle (1 Pet. 5:13) stated that he was writing from the church in *Babylon* (code name for Jerusalem), showing that he was familiar with the material in the book of Revelation when he wrote in AD 63. So it seems appropriate for the book of Revelation to have been written and in circulation by the time *Jesus the Farmer* pronounced these similar woes in Sept-Oct 62 AD. Indeed, if John was exiled in April of 62, he would have had four or five months to have written it and put it into circulation before Jesus the Farmer started declaring doom on Jerusalem. That date makes a lot of sense in view of all this (Summer of AD 62).

Jesus the Farmer continued his doomsayings for seven years and five months until one of the stones from the Roman stone throwing engines (ballistae) struck him dead during the siege [Summer of AD 70]. [*War* 6.300-309 (6.5.3)] Those stones weighed about a talent each (about 70 or 80 pounds). Compare Josephus *War* [*War* 3:167 (3.7.9) and 5:270 (5.6.3)] with the statement in Rev 16:21 about the weight of the hailstones in the great hailstorm. Josephus seems to relate firsthand details regarding this prophet's ministry, so it seems likely that this prophet began his pronouncements just before Josephus went to Rome to free the hostage priests. Josephus evidently did not leave for Rome until after the Feast of Booths, which makes sense when we remember that his ship was shipwrecked in the Winter storms of late 62 (just like Apostle Paul's shipwreck two years earlier). We also notice that Josephus doesn't give any further details about this except to say that the prophet continued his sayings until the [Roman] siege began and a stone from the "stone throwers" struck him dead.

Josephus Went to Rome (AD 62-66)

Nov 62 – Josephus (26 years old) traveled to Rome to free some fellow priests imprisoned there, who had been sent to Rome by Felix before he was removed from office in May of AD 60. This trip was two years after Paul's voyage (Late 60), and just like Paul on his voyage to Rome, Josephus suffered shipwreck and somehow survived. There is some debate about whether Josephus traveled to Rome in late 62 or early 63. Josephus was very much aware of the killing of James (April 62) and the controversy over the rash action of Ananus II (July 62), so it is probable that Josephus was still in Judea for those events. And he was probably still in Jerusalem when Jesus b. Ananus began crying "Woe, Woe to Jerusalem" (Oct 62), since he seems very specific about the details. Since Josephus was shipwrecked on his way to Rome, and most shipwrecks occurred during the late Fall and Winter storms, there is good reason to believe that Josephus must have traveled to Rome during the late Fall of 62 and early Winter of 63.

He survived the shipwreck and met up with a Jewish stage actor (Aliturius) in Puteoli who was a friend of Poppaea, the wife of Nero. Through him, Josephus gained the attention of Poppaea, who arranged the release of those priests who had been sent to Rome by Felix a few years earlier. Josephus says that these "certain priests of my acquaintance ... were very excellent persons, whom on a small and trifling occasion Felix had put into bonds and sent to Rome to plead their cause before Caesar" (*Life of Josephus* 3.13). It is possible that his mission also included gaining freedom for Ishmael and Helcias, who were likewise being held hostage in Rome by Poppaea (see more about this above under the appointment of Ishmael b. Simon the High Priest in AD 58-59 and his detention in Rome in AD 61).

Josephus arrived in Rome either while Paul was still awaiting trial (late 62), or just about the time of Paul's trial and release (early 63). He stayed in Rome for almost four years, and was still there at the time Paul was arrested the second time and sent back to Rome for execution (late 63 or early 64).

Josephus was still there in Rome at the time of the great fire (July 64), and afterwards when Nero

rounded up the Christians and killed them. Strangely, Josephus does not say a word about either of those two events, even though he was there at that time. That raises red flags about whether he may have used his connections with Poppaea to get Nero to place the blame for the fire on the Christians. He was there in Rome, and had the ear of Poppaea. He had motive and opportunity, the two key ingredients for suspicion. He certainly would have been aware of Paul and the Christians there, through his association with the other Jewish leaders in Rome who had met with Paul two years earlier. But since Josephus does not say anything about the fire, nor about the persecution afterwards, it is impossible to know whether or not he played any role in setting up the Neronic persecution.

Josephus returned to Judea in August of AD 66 just as the war was beginning. He says that the rebels were already in possession of the Temple at the time he returned, but that Cestius Gallus had not attacked yet. (*Life of Josephus* 4:17 – 5:23) It is worth noting that Josephus puts more details in his narrative about the state of affairs in Judea and Jerusalem for those periods when he was actually present there. During his absence in Rome, the narrative about conditions in Jerusalem is more sketchy and less detailed, and more reliant on secondhand information. We will say more about this in our narrative below at Aug 66.

Paul's First Three Prison Epistles (AD 62-63)

Late 62 - Early 63 – Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon – These first three prison epistles seem to have been written and sent near the end of his two years of house-arrest, when the trial was evidently underway. We might wonder why he did not write them earlier in his imprisonment. It was probably because Paul, Luke and Mark were feverishly preoccupied for the first year of his imprisonment with the production of the two-volume work, **Luke-Acts**, which must have been extremely useful for his defense in his trial before Nero's court. That would easily explain why there were no written epistles sent from Paul during the first year or so of his house-arrest before his case went to trial. However, as soon as **Luke** and **Acts** were finished, his couriers must have made a fast track to all the churches to distribute them, and report by word of mouth what Paul's present situation was, as well as ask for their prayers and support.

Moreover, throughout the time of his imprisonment he was probably sending couriers to the churches who reported verbally (unwritten only, no paper trail) on his status. Plus, the churches themselves (e.g., Philippi, Colossae, et al) were sending their own messengers (e.g., Epaphroditus, et al) to take support to Paul and learn of his status. When those messengers of the churches returned from Rome, they verbally reported on Paul's status. We catch a glimpse of this unwritten report idea in Col. 4:7-9, where Paul tells the Colossians that Tychicus will inform them by word of mouth (not written) what his status is (cf. Eph. 6:21-22). Then Paul reminds the Colossians that they had previously received instructions about Mark (Col. 4:10). Those were evidently unwritten instructions, or else they were not preserved for us. This illustrates what we already know was common practice in the first century, that couriers (messengers) normally carried both written and unwritten messages.

Near the end of his imprisonment, when the trial seemed to be going well, he began sending some epistles to the various churches in his network. But these epistles did not give very many details of his trial, probably because he knew that his captors were reading it and checking it over before it was allowed to be sent out to the churches. He did not want to write anything which would give his captors a reason to censor his writings and provide his accusers and prosecutors with any evidence that they could use against him. Details like that were best left for the courier to share by word of mouth.

A lot of insight into the timing and sequence of events from Paul's first arrest (AD 58) down to the outbreak of the war (AD 66) can be gained by analyzing the location and movements of Paul's fellow workers. Several specialized books on Apostle Paul have carefully analyzed the activities of Paul's fellow workers, and their excellent research has been used in our reconstructions here. Arthur Ogden's book, *The Development of the New Testament*, is one of the best sources.

It is fairly easy to nail down a range of possible dates for the composition of Paul's prison epistles. Paul was sent to Rome in the late Fall of AD 60. After being shipwrecked on the island of Malta, where they spent the Winter (three months), it was not until March (AD 61) at the earliest that they were able to board another Alexandrian grain ship and head toward Rome. This places the beginning of Paul's imprisonment in March 61. Paul stayed two full years under house arrest in Rome, before he was

released. The earliest date for his release would have been March of AD 63. This gives us a range of **March 61 to March 63** for the prison epistles.

Can we be more specific in regard to precisely when **Ephesians** and **Colossians** might have been written during his two-year range? Was it near the beginning of his imprisonment (61), in the middle (62), or near the end (63)?

We know they were written while Paul was awaiting the outcome of his trial before Nero (Eph. 3:1). In Eph. 6:21-22, Paul says that he has sent **Tychicus** with this letter, so that "you may know about my circumstances, how I am doing ... [he] will make everything known to you ... that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts." Paul had been in Rome long enough to know what his status was. He would not have sent word to them if his situation was still unknown. This implies at least several months after he had arrived, if not a lot longer. He evidently waited to write to them until he had a pretty good idea about how his case before Nero would probably go. Things seem to be stable at the time of writing, with no indication of immediate danger. Tychicus was sent to "comfort their hearts" about the situation.

However, Paul does not yet seem to be anticipating acquittal and release, as would have been the case if the final phase of the trial was underway. Thus, a date in the last six months of the range would seem appropriate. Paul tended to write his letters (and make copies) during the Winter when they could not travel, and then send his couriers out with them in the Spring. This would point to a date in the late Fall of 62, or very early Winter of 63.

Some have suggested that the closing greetings of Ephesians and Colossians might give us some clues as to when they were written, especially when those greetings are compared with the closing greetings in his other prison epistles. Here are the closing greetings from all five epistles:

Closing Greetings of the Prison Epistles:

- Eph. 6:24 – Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.
- Col. 4:18 – Grace be with you.
- Phm. 25 – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. [cf. Php]
- Php. 4:23 – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. [cf. Phm]
- Heb. 13:25 – Grace be with you all.

They do not tell us anything more definite than we already know from the internal evidence of the epistles. However, it is interesting that both **Philemon** and **Philippians** have exactly the same closing greeting, word for word, suggesting that they might have been written about the same time. Furthermore, the similarity in travel plans of Paul and Timothy mentioned in both Php. 2:24 and Heb. 13:23 suggest that both Philippians and Hebrews were written right at the end of Paul's imprisonment (March AD 63). So, the similarity between Philemon and Philippians may indicate that Philemon was written about the same time as Philippians and Hebrews. However, Philemon was delivered by a different courier (**Tychicus**) than Philippians (**Epaphras**) and Hebrews (**Mark?**). This does not help us nail down the dates of Ephesians and Colossians any tighter, other than to suggest what we already suspect, that **Ephesians, and Colossians** were written about the same time, and sent together with the epistle to **Philemon**, which was written soon afterwards.

Philemon (verses 1, 10-12, and 23-24) tells us that Timothy, Onesimus, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke were with Paul when he wrote Philemon. Apphia and Archippus were in Colossae with Philemon. Note here that Demas was still with Paul and had not yet deserted him (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10). This dates Philemon before the Neronic persecution broke out, at which time Demas fell away and returned to Judaism ("...having loved this present age" 2 Tim. 4:10).

Tychicus was the courier that carried all three epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon) to the churches in Asia Minor. Is there any evidence from any of Paul's epistles to help us pinpoint when Tychicus might have done that? Are the movements of Tychicus mentioned in any of the other letters, with any indication of their date? Yes, to both questions.

Paul, in both Ephesians and Colossians appeals to his readers to pray for him, so that he will be empowered and emboldened "to make known the mystery of the gospel" and to "speak forth the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 6:19-20 and Col. 4:3-4). It is hard to tell from this appeal whether he was already engaged in speaking boldly at his trial, or whether he was simply praying for the strength to do it once the trial did begin. Since there are no other indications that the trial was already underway or nearly over (as we see in the case of Philippians especially, and maybe in Philemon), the implication is

that Ephesians and Colossians were written earlier than Philemon and Philippians, at a time when the trial had either not yet begun, or had just begun and they had no clear idea of what the outcome would be. Since Paul gave that information to Tychicus to relay to them by word of mouth, it is impossible to know whether the trial was already underway at the time Ephesians and Colossians were written. However, the epistle to Philemon expresses a more definite hope that Paul would be released and come to Colossae to stay with Philemon, suggesting that it may have been written nearer the end of the trial when Paul was more optimistic about the outcome. Tychicus delivered these three epistles to Asia Minor (Eph, Col, Philem). And based on the more optimistic expression of hope in Philemon, we can assume that Tychicus left on that courier mission after Paul's trial had begun, but before it ended.

Tychicus is mentioned in the epistle to Titus, which was written sometime after Paul was released. It seems that Tychicus had already delivered the three epistles (Eph, Col, and Phm) to the churches in Asia Minor months earlier (AD 62-63). We also see Tychicus in Ephesus later when Paul wrote Second Timothy during his second imprisonment (at the time of the Neronic persecution in late AD 64). So, the movements of Tychicus do support the idea that these three epistles were written near the end of Paul's first imprisonment, after the trial had begun, but before they knew how it would go.

Letter coming from the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16)? While we are discussing the two prison epistles of Ephesians and Colossians, I want to mention a question that I often receive about Paul's Epistle that was coming to the church in Colossae from the Church in Laodicea. Many have asked me whether that may be a lost epistle that we may someday find and add to our NT canon. However, most of the commentaries on Colossians and Ephesians discuss this issue, and explain that the epistle to the Ephesians appears to be that missing letter. There is an eight-page PDF article about that entitled, **"Ephesians Intro,"** which you may obtain by email request to: <**preterist1@preterist.org**>.

Paul's Trial and Release (AD 63)

Early 63 – Final phase of Paul's trial in Rome, and Paul's release from his first imprisonment. We noticed in our comments about the writing of **Luke-Acts** in AD 61-62 that these two books appear to have been written for Paul's defense before Nero. Theophilus was evidently some kind of court official or defense attorney for Paul, who needed to know the details of Paul's case. Luke wrote the two books for Theophilus, so that Theophilus would know the exact truth about Christianity and Paul, in preparation for defending Paul in court.

Evidently the first year and a half was consumed by the production of Luke-Acts and the book of Hebrews. No other prison epistles seem to have been written until near the end of his imprisonment when his trial began. Yet we know that both Mark and Luke (and others) were there with Paul, and they were evidently very busy helping Paul prepare his defense. A big part of that defense was the two-volume Luke and Acts, which were obviously written for Gentile readers. After Luke and Acts were finished, Paul evidently started writing another theological masterpiece, the book of Hebrews, which was finished by the time his trial was over and he was released.

It is interesting that the book of Acts contains many court cases, which could easily be used as precedents to influence Nero's acquittal of Paul. So, the two-volume work of Luke (Luke-Acts) must have been extremely helpful when Paul's case went to trial before Nero. The fact that Paul was a Roman citizen, was a huge factor in his favor. Furthermore, the evidence from the Centurion who guarded Paul during the voyage to Rome would have helped Paul's case immeasurably (Acts 27:43), as well as the fact that the Jews in Rome had received no letters from Judea about Paul (Acts 28:21). The whole Praetorian guard was kindly disposed toward Paul, which also helped his case (Php. 1:13). And according to Php. 4:22, there were fellow Christians there in Rome who were "of Caesar's household."

Paul mentioned in his letter to **Titus** (written after his release) that Apollos and Zenas the lawyer had been in Rome with him at the time of his trial (Tit. 3:13). Apollos was a great orator, and Zenas was a lawyer. The implication is that they helped Paul in his defense before Nero. So, Paul had lots of things going for him when his case went to trial before Nero's court. It is therefore no surprise that he was exonerated and released. Now, let's talk about Paul's epistle to the Philippians.

Early 63 – Paul's Epistle to the Philippians was written just before the end of Paul's trial in Rome. Even though our focus is on the book of Philippians, we will have to look at the other four prison epistles

(Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Hebrews), since they were all written about the same time, and provide the evidence we need to nail down the date of Philippians.

All five of these prison epistles need to be studied in close relation to each other in order to determine not only their dates, but their sequence of writing as well. When we do that, we will see that there were three short periods of time near the end of Paul's imprisonment when these five prison epistles were written: (1) Late 62 or Early 63 just before or as the trial was beginning, (2) Early 63 when the trial was nearly over, and (3) Early 63 right after Paul was released. Below we will show that Ephesians and Colossians were written in that first time period, with Philemon and Philippians in the second, and Hebrews in the third.

We had suggested above that the first three prison epistles of **Ephesians**, **Colossians**, and **Philemon** were written about the middle of his imprisonment in early 62. Now, however, after a lot more analysis, it seems that those first three epistles were written late in 62 or very early 63, not long before the epistle of **Philippians** and the end of Paul's Trial and release. That will be more apparent to us as we look more closely at the other two epistles that Paul wrote near the end of his imprisonment (**Philippians** and **Hebrews**).

The travel of **Tychicus** (the courier for those first three epistles) is a key factor in arriving at these dates. Knowing that he was the courier assigned to take **Ephesians**, **Colossians**, and **Philemon** to Asia Minor, greatly helps us pinpoint the dates for all five of the prison epistles (including Philippians and Hebrews). Tychicus is mentioned in Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon as being **present with Paul in Rome** at the time of writing, and leaving soon to carry these three letters to Asia Minor before the outcome of the trial was known. And since both Philemon and Philippians were written near the end of Paul's trial when things were looking less uncertain and more promising, it helps us see that Ephesians and Colossians were written not long before Philemon and Philippians.

Since **Ephesians**, **Colossians**, and **Philemon** went together with **Tychicus**, this is double confirmation that they were written shortly before or about the same time as **Philippians** (near the end of the trial when the outcome was expected soon).

As we noted in our study of Paul's first three prison epistles (Eph, Col, Philemon), particularly in **Philemon**, the outcome of the trial was still uncertain at the time of writing, but Paul was optimistic in his hope for acquittal and release, and was already making contingency plans to come visit the Colossians and stay with Philemon if and when he was released. That implies that **Philemon** was written late in his imprisonment, while the trial was underway, and Paul was hoping for a favorable outcome.

In **Philippians**, the outcome of the trial was likewise still uncertain, but Paul expresses more of an expectation (not just a hope) that he would be acquitted and released "soon," with the final decision being expected "shortly." Here in **Philippians**, Paul says he is sending **Epaphroditus** to them with this letter, and that if he (Paul) is released soon, he would come with Timothy to visit them.

Epaphras (shortened form of Epaphroditus) is another key figure in all this. Studying his evangelistic work and courier movements greatly helps us nail down the dates and sequence of these prison epistles, especially for **Philippians**. Note that Epaphras is mentioned five times in three of Paul's prison epistles (Php. 2:25; 4:18; Col. 1:7; 4:12; and Phm. 23). He appears to have been taught by Paul (possibly while Paul was in Ephesus) and then sent by Paul to establish churches in nearby Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and the other cities in Asia Minor. This appears to be why Paul lays claim to those churches in the Lycus valley, since they were established as a result of the work of Epaphras whom Paul had trained. Epaphras was from Colossae originally (Col. 4:12), and evidently traveled through Philippi on his way to visit Paul in Rome. The Philippians sent some support with Epaphras to give to Paul. He probably visited the church in Philippi on his way to Rome, hoping that they might help him on his way. Apparently they did help him, along with providing for Paul's needs as well.

Paul evidently had been in prison in Rome for quite a while before he wrote his letter to the **Philippians**, since he mentions that the Philippians had sent Epaphras to Rome with funds to help Paul. Because those funds were not sufficient to cover all of Paul's needs, Epaphras had worked on the side there in Rome to raise the rest of the needed support. He almost worked himself to death, and now that he had recovered his health, Paul was sending him back to the **Philippians** with this letter. All of this activity presupposes that Paul had been in prison for quite a while by the time he wrote to the Philippians.

At the time of writing Philippians, Paul did not know for sure what the outcome of his trial would be

(Php. 1:20-25), but he saw the definite need for more mission work and believed that God would somehow allow him to be released to do that work. We know the **trial was underway**, since he planned to send Timothy to them "shortly" and "immediately" as soon as he "sees how things go" (Php. 2:19-30). He could not have had this kind of expectation of release, and plans to visit Philippi, earlier in his imprisonment. This language clearly points to a time late in his imprisonment after the trial had begun, when the final decision was expected soon. This would have been near the end of his two years of house-arrest, since it implies that the outcome would most likely be known "shortly".

It should be no surprise to us that **Philippians** (4:21) does not name the "brethren" who were with Paul in Rome at the time of writing, since his epistle to **Philemon** (1:1; 1:23-24) had already named them: Timothy, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. This helps us date both of the epistles (Philemon and Philippians) as early in 63, since in both epistles **Epaphras** (Epaphroditus) was still there in Rome with Paul and had not yet been sent to the Philippians.

Furthermore, both Philemon (1:1) and Philippians (1:1) mention **Timothy** as being there with Paul at the time he wrote, whereas in Hebrews it says that Timothy had been released just like Paul, but was on a trip somewhere and was expected back from that trip shortly. This indicates that both Philemon and Philippians were written about the same time, while the trial was in progress, before the outcome was known, but with Paul being hopeful and expectant.

When Paul said that he planned to send Timothy shortly (Php. 2:19-24), it sounds very much like the same trip referred to in Heb. 13:23. There are several points of similarity between them. Combining the two accounts, assuming that they are talking about the same trip of Timothy, it means that **Paul sent Timothy to Philippi** right after the trial was over, and waited in Rome for him to return before leaving with Timothy on another trip to visit the churches addressed in Hebrews.

In **Philippians**, Paul indicates that he was still in prison, but believed he would be released, possibly soon, and would come with Timothy to visit the Philippians (see Phm. 22; Php. 1:19-26; and 2:23-24). Heb. 13:23 also mentions Paul's plan to come with Timothy to visit the churches addressed in the Hebrews epistle (which evidently included the church in Philippi).

As we can see, these similarities between **Philippians** and **Hebrews** not only supports the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, but fixes the date of all three books (Philemon, Philippians, and Hebrews) as being near the end of Paul's trial and release from Roman imprisonment (Early 63). And if Philemon was written near the end of his trial, then Ephesians and Colossians could not have been too much earlier, since all three epistles (Eph, Col, and Philemon) were delivered at the same time by the same courier to the churches in Asia Minor.

In **Hebrews,** Epaphroditus is not mentioned at all, implying that the letter to the Philippians had already been sent via Epaphroditus by the time Hebrews was ready to send. Also, in **Hebrews** Paul has already been acquitted and released and was about to come with Timothy to visit the churches that were addressed in the book of Hebrews, just as he said he would earlier in Philippians. According to Php. 1:19-26, it appears that one of the stops that Paul and Timothy would make along their way to Colossae would be the church in Philippi.

Furthermore, neither epistle (Philippians or Hebrews) mentions any other fellow workers by name as being with Paul in Rome other than Timothy and Epaphroditus. However, **Philippians** does mention "the brethren who are with me" and some other saints, "especially those of Caesar's household." This also indicates a date of writing for Philippians late in Paul's imprisonment, after his evangelistic efforts there had produced much fruit even among the Praetorian guard and in Caesar's household.

Even though the greetings at the end of Philippians and Hebrews are not the same, the greeting at the end of Philippians is identical word for word with Philemon, suggesting that **Philemon** was written about the same time as **Philippians**. So the sequence of writing for these last three prison epistles of Paul appears to be: (1) Philemon, (2) Philippians, and then (3) Hebrews.

These comparisons between Philemon, Philippians and Hebrews indicate that **Philemon and Philippians** were written just before the end of Paul's imprisonment, when the outcome of the trial was still uncertain but optimistic, whereas **Hebrews** was written after the trial was over and Paul had been released.

Below is how we would date and sequence these five epistles in relation to the three periods of time that we mentioned above. Keep in mind that the trial probably did not last long after it started. It probably began in very early 63 and was over by Spring (still early 63).

(1) **Eph** and **Col** – Late 62 or early 63 just before or as the trial was beginning
(2) **Philemon** and **Philippians** – Early 63 when the trial was nearly over
(3) **Hebrews** – Right after Paul was released

Right after Philemon was written, **Tychicus** left with all three epistles (Eph, Col, and Phm) to deliver them to the churches in Asia Minor. Philippians was written not long after Philemon, before the trial was over, and was then sent to Philippi using **Epaphroditus** as the courier.

Now let's talk about the epistle to the **Hebrews**. You will note that I start out with the assumption that it was written by Paul. There is no doubt in my mind about that. Paul was the author of the book, and we will see why that is so important to understand as we go along here in our study. I will not spend a lot of words here arguing for his authorship, but I will provide a sampling of some of the arguments which convinced me. It is presented in the section below on "About the Book of Hebrews".

Introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews (AD 62-63)

The Epistle to the *Hebrews* – This theological treatise ranks right up there at the top of the most important doctrinal works in our New Testament, alongside the book of Romans and the Gospel of John. It contains so much valuable information about how the Old Covenant faith was transitioned into the New Covenant, especially in regard to redemption and eschatology. We need to discuss WHO wrote it, TO WHOM it was written, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY it was written. The WHO question first.

Many have doubted **Paul's authorship of the book of Hebrews**. However, after examining the arguments both pro and con for all the possible writers that have been suggested throughout church history (Luke, Barnabas, Mark, Clement of Rome, Apollos, Silas, et al), the internal evidence appears to be heavily weighted toward Paul. And it needs to be remembered that the whole Eastern church attributed it to Paul from the earliest times. Moreover, it was Clement of Rome (first century writer) who made the first quotes from and allusions to the book of Hebrews (compare *Heb* 1:1-14; 2:17-18; 4:14-16; and *1 Clement* 36:1-5). This supports the idea that Paul finished Hebrews and put it in circulation while he was in prison in Rome, since the first awareness and use of Hebrews comes from Clement in Rome.

Here is what **John Owen** said about the authorship in his Introduction to **Calvin's commentary** on the book of Hebrews:

> From the earliest times, the Eastern Church acknowledged Paul as the Author. ...Jerome and Augustine in the fifth century ... ascribed to Paul the authorship; and since their time the same opinion has prevailed in the Western, as it did from the beginning in the Eastern Church...
>
> As far then as the testimony of history goes, almost the whole weight of evidence is in favor of Paul being the Author.
>
> With regard to modern times, the prevailing opinion has been that it is the Epistle of Paul. ... Beza regarded Paul as the writer; and such has been the opinion entertained by most of the successors of the Reformers, both in this country and on the Continent, as proved by their confessions of Faith.
>
> About the middle of the seventeenth century there seems to have been a revival of the controversy; for in the year 1658 the younger Spanheim wrote an elaborate treatise on the subject, in which he canvasses the whole evidence, both historical and internal, and affords the strongest ground for the conclusion that Paul was the writer of this Epistle. Since that time, till late years, his arguments were regarded by most as conclusive. But some of the German divines, who seem to have a taste for exploded opinions, have again revived the question, produced afresh the old arguments, and added some new ones to them. But a second Spanheim has appeared in the person of Professor [Moses] Stuart, of America, who has published a learned Commentary on this Epistle, and prefixed to it a long Introduction, in which he has fully entered into the subject, and more fully than his predecessor. The labor and toil which this Introduction must have cost its author, were no doubt very great; for every argument, however frivolous, (and some of the arguments are very frivolous indeed,) is noticed, and everything plausible is most clearly exposed.
>
> The evidence both external and internal is so satisfactory, that an impression is left on the mind, that Paul was the author of this Epistle, nearly equal to what his very name prefixed to it would have produced. Indeed the writer [John Owen] can truly say, that he now entertains no more doubt on the subject than if it had the Apostle's own superscription.

As to the date of this Epistle, it is commonly supposed to have been written late in 62 or early in 63, about the time that Paul was released from his first imprisonment at Rome.

There seems to be especially two reasons why Paul did not commence this Epistle in his usual manner: first, because he was not specifically an Apostle to the Jews, but to the Gentiles; and secondly, because the contents of the Epistle are such that it was not necessary for him to assume his Apostolic character; for the arguments are founded on testimonies found in the Old Testament, and not on his authority as a commissioned Apostle.... [John Owen, Introduction to *Calvin's Commentary on Hebrews.* Boldface added]

The main arguments used here to support Pauline authorship of Hebrews come from the following five considerations:

1. Arguments against Paul's authorship are weak and easily refuted (Heb 2:1-4)
2. Arguments for Paul's authorship are clear and strong (esp. Heb 13)
3. John Owen's introduction to Calvin's commentary on Hebrews (see above)
4. Peter Leithart's exposition of 2 Peter (*The Promise of His Appearing*)
5. The context of Hebrews 13 leaves no doubt about Paul's authorship

To Whom Was Hebrews Written?

It seems to me that those who arranged the NT books in their present arrangement, did well in placing the book of Hebrews among the "General Epistles" or "Catholic Epistles" addressed to all the churches. This would mean that Hebrews was written to the Jewish Christians in all the churches (both inside Palestine and outside in the Diaspora). Since Paul says that he, along with Timothy, intended to soon visit the recipients of this epistle, it implies that at least some of these Jewish Christians (Hebrews) were near Rome, or along the route that he planned to travel on his way from Rome to Colossae:

> Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, **with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you**. Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. **Those from Italy greet you**. [Heb. 13:23-24 NAS95]

Paul (in Hebrews) seems to be writing not only to the same Diaspora Jewish Christians to whom Barnabas, James, Peter, John, and Jude wrote their epistles (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia), but also to ALL Hebrew Christians, including those inside Palestine and Judea who were probably upset by the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and being persecuted for what it taught (i.e., that the Jews never received the Old Covenant in the first place). This general circulation for Hebrews seems confirmed by the fact that it did end up in the hands of Peter in Jerusalem. Peter almost certainly alludes to it in his second epistle (2 Pet. 3:7-16) which was written to the Diaspora churches in AD 64. Paul's letter to Philemon in Colossae had stated that he intended to visit Colossae (in Asia) after his release. The churches in Achaia, Thessalonica and Macedonia are fairly close to Italy, while the churches in Asia were further away. Paul evidently left Timothy in Ephesus on his trip to Colossae, after they had passed through all the churches in Achaia and Macedonia (i.e., Corinth, Thessalonica, Berea, Philippi, Troas, et al). Paul went on to Colossae, while Timothy stayed at Ephesus. Since I believe John Mark was the courier for the book of Hebrews, it is easy to understand how Hebrews found its way into all the churches of the Diaspora and inside Palestine.

The general epistles (**Hebrews**, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, and Jude) seem to be encyclicals, intended for duplication and wide circulation among all the churches both inside and outside Judea.

Paul sent several letters on ahead of him (Eph, Col, Phm, Php) before he sent the Hebrews epistle. One of the purposes of all those letters, including Hebrews, was to alert his churches in Greece, Macedonia, and Turkey of his plan to visit them soon. Tychicus and Onesimus had been dispatched to Ephesus and Colossae, while Epaphras had been dispatched to Philippi. Justus disappeared from the list of fellow workers that were present with Paul just before his release. That left only Mark, Luke, Aristarchus, Demas, and Timothy with Paul. Since Timothy, Luke, Aristarchus, and Demas were planning to travel with Paul, it seems that **Mark** must have been the courier whom Paul dispatched with the book of Hebrews to go ahead of him to visit all of the churches not only in Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor, but also the rest of Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, and Judea, on his way back to Peter and his home church in Jerusalem.

Early Date of Hebrews (AD 62-63)

Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews was evidently written in late 62 and early 63 just before the final phase of his trial and his release. We have to wonder what effect the book of Hebrews would have had on the outcome of his trial in Rome if it had been put into circulation there in Rome before his case went to trial. Would the Jews in Rome have used it as evidence against him? And what about afterwards? Evidently the epistle was sent by courier right after Paul had been released. What would the unbelieving Jews in Greece, Turkey, Syria, Alexandria, and Palestine have thought about this epistle? Would it have made them even more determined to kill Paul? I suspect so. That may be one of the factors which caused "all who are in Asia" to turn away from Paul when he visited those churches in Asia after his release from Rome (2 Tim 1:15). The book of Hebrews had already been delivered to those churches in Asia, in an area where there were many unbelieving Jews. In fact, it was unbelieving Jews from that very region of Asia who caused the uproar in Jerusalem that got Paul arrested originally (Acts 21:27; 24:18). It is no surprise, therefore, that Paul got such a cold reception in Asia when he went back there after his release from Rome.

It is difficult to know for sure what Paul meant when he said, "Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you" (Heb. 13:23). It could mean that Timothy had just been released and was on his way to wherever Paul was at the time. Or, it could mean that Timothy had been released some time ago and had gone on a courier trip for Paul, and was expected back from that trip shortly, at which time they would leave Italy together to visit the various churches in Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor on Paul's way to Colossae. It is this latter option that seems most likely. Notice what Paul said to those fellow Hebrew Christians whom he was "soon" planning to visit:

> So, **let us go out to Him outside the camp**, bearing His reproach. For **here we do not have a lasting city**, but we are seeking the city which is about to be. Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. [Heb. 13:13-16 NAS95]

Paul encourages the Hebrew Christians to "go out to Him outside the camp" because "here we do not have a lasting city." This was an encouragement to all Hebrew Christians to share in the reproach and ostracism that was beginning to be heaped upon them by the Jewish establishment, just like Jesus and the apostles had already suffered. Those Jewish Christians were being cast out of the synagogues, persecuted, and rejected. Paul encourages them to remember that Jesus was cast out of the synagogues and crucified outside the earthly city as well. The earthly city was not the ultimate place to which they were going. Instead, it was the heavenly city which was "about to be" [Gk. mello]. It is this very encouragement ("go out to Him outside the camp") which has caused some interpreters of *Hebrews* to suggest that Paul had already read the book of *Revelation* by this time, since it contains a similar description of the heavenly city, and a command to the Christians to "come out of her my people" (Rev. 18:4). When we remember all the other statements about the new heavens and earth and the new heavenly Jerusalem which Hebrews contains, it seems even more probable that Paul either had seen the book of Revelation by that time, or else received an independent revelation of these things which was harmonious with and parallel to what John says in the book of Revelation.

What pushes me further in the direction of an AD 62 date for the book of **Revelation** are the statements by Peter in both of his epistles (1 Pet. 5:13 and 2 Pet. 3:7-16), where he states that he was writing to the churches outside Palestine in the Diaspora (implying that he was in Palestine at the time of writing). Notice in 1 Pet. 5:13 that Peter claims to be writing from a church that was in a city code-named " Babylon" where Mark was. We know that Mark's mother had a home in Jerusalem. Peter's reference to Jerusalem as being "Babylon" tells us that either he had read the Apocalypse already, or had received a parallel revelation about Jerusalem being "Babylon." Since both Paul and Peter show awareness of the contents of the Apocalypse in AD 63, before the Neronic persecution began, it implies that **Revelation** had already been written and put into circulation in late AD 62, just as Paul was finishing his epistle to the **Hebrews** (late 62 and early 63), and just before **Peter** wrote his first epistle (AD 63).

Hebrews appears to be Paul's last big book that he wrote before his pastoral epistles (AD 63) and his martyrdom (AD 63-64). Many students of first century history have overlooked the probability that Hebrews was written while Paul was in Rome awaiting his trial. We know that the epistle to the Hebrews

was **SENT** to the churches right after Paul was released from prison in early 63. However, that does not automatically mean that it was **WRITTEN** in that short space of time between his release and his leaving Rome with Timothy "soon" afterwards (Heb. 13:23). The book is **too sophisticated** in its argumentation and exhortation to have been hastily thrown together at the last minute after Paul was released. The **complexity and sublimity** of its theology implies an **extended period of time for its composition**. That is why I believe it was most likely written during the last six months of Paul's imprisonment (Late 62 and Early 63), after Luke had finished his two-volume work of Luke-Acts, but before the other four prison epistles were written. Hebrews was probably finished by the time Paul's case went to trial (early 63). Then, after the trial was over and he was released, he added the closing verses of chapter 13 and sent it out by courier (Mark).

If this is correct, then it means that Hebrews was actually **WRITTEN** before the other four prison epistles, during the Summer or Autumn of 62, but not released and **SENT** by courier until after the trial was over in early 63. We might wonder why it was not sent out earlier. Perhaps Paul was unsure about what effect it might have on his trial if it got into the hands of unbelieving Jews or his Roman captors there in Rome before the trial was over. This concern for the outcome of his trial may also be why he did not write any epistles to the churches during his first year of house-arrest. Only when he felt more confident in the outcome did he dare write to his churches, and even then the language was cautious not to say anything about his situation which might put him or his churches at further risk.

When Mark joined Paul in Rome (AD 61), he probably brought with him at least three documents: copies of the two gospels, *Matthew* and *Mark*, plus the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Luke evidently used those other two gospels to write his own gospel (Luke) and the book of Acts, which were evidently finished before Paul's case went to trial (late 62 or early 63). This would imply that Mark reached Rome soon after Paul did (in AD 61). Since Paul's book of *Hebrews*, written while he was in Rome, seems to correct some of the harsh anti-Judaic rhetoric and misguided theology of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, it implies that Paul had access to it before he wrote Hebrews (AD 62-63). And the fact that his epistle to the *Romans* also seems to correct some of the defective theology of Barnabas, there is a good chance that Paul had already seen the *Epistle of Barnabas*, or at least knew what Barnabas was teaching among the churches, before he wrote his epistle to the Romans in AD 58. See the Masters Thesis of Ed Stevens which deals with this in greater detail (*Redating the Epistle of Barnabas*).

Further evidence that this is the correct dating for Hebrews comes from its similarities and connections with the book of Revelation. It is very significant that the similarities between Hebrews and the Apocalypse do not show up in Hebrews until late in the book (chapters 12 and 13). This gives us a clue as to when the book of Revelation was written in relation to the book of Hebrews, and vice versa. The book of Hebrews was probably started before a copy of the Apocalypse reached Paul. Then later in 62, after Paul received a copy of the **Revelation**, he included some material in chapters 12 and 13 of Hebrews which show his awareness of Revelation. Paul would have received his copy late in the writing process of Hebrews, probably after the first eleven chapters were already finished. That explains why the similarities with the book of Revelation do not show up in Hebrews until chapters 12 and 13, just as Paul was putting the finishing touches to Hebrews in late 62 or very early 63.

Paul added the final verses to Hebrews (13:22-25) just after his release, and before he left Italy to travel with Timothy toward Colossae in the Spring of AD 63. The epistle was evidently sent via courier to his network of churches in Greece, Macedonia, and Turkey. When Timothy returned, they left Rome to go visit the churches addressed in his other prison epistles and this epistle of Hebrews. As we noted above, it seems pretty likely that **Mark was the courier** for the epistle to the Hebrews. We will discuss that in more detail below. So the book of Hebrews appears to be Paul's last big book that he wrote before his shorter pastoral epistles and his death about the time of the Neronic persecution.

Why Was Hebrews Written?

The "why" question is always a very important question to answer, since we need to know *why* a book was written in order to understand *what* it means. It is just as important as knowing **who** wrote it, **to whom** it was written, **when** and **where** it was written.

When Paul went to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey, he had to address the concerns of the law-zealous Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who accused him of teaching the Diaspora Jews to not circumcise their children, nor walk according to the customs of Moses and the Law (Acts 21:17-26). This accusation was probably not surprising to Paul. He had already addressed similar issues

in some of his epistles. Furthermore, when he visited Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey, just before going to Jerusalem, he must have discovered what Barnabas was teaching to Diaspora Jews about forsaking Moses and all the customs including circumcision. That may have been what prompted him to write the epistle to the Romans right there at Corinth, in which he clarified the Jewish Christian's relationship to the Law. And since Paul had been associated with Barnabas just eight years before this, many of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would have assumed that Paul was teaching the same thing as Barnabas. So, it would have been no shock to Paul when he was questioned by his fellow apostles and elders in Jerusalem to explain why he was supposedly teaching Diaspora Jews to forsake Moses, just like Barnabas was. He had an excellent answer to that question in his epistle to the Romans, which was written just before he came to Jerusalem.

Anyone who had listened to Paul knew that he did not teach any Jews (Diaspora or Palestinian) to abandon the Mosaic Law and cease circumcising their children, since he himself also "walked orderly, keeping the Law." His epistle to the Romans would easily set the record straight on that. However, the book of Romans did not address the sacrificial issues and typological aspects of the Christian faith, so Paul needed to write something like the epistle to the Hebrews to further clarify the relationship of the Jewish Christian to the Temple and sacrificial system. Once he got to Rome and got his defense ready, he could then write the epistle of Hebrews. It was probably the arrival of Mark in Rome which stimulated Paul to begin writing Hebrews. Mark would have brought the *Epistle of Barnabas* with him. Reading that would have provoked Paul to finally set the record straight on the rest of the matters not covered in his epistle to the Romans. All the Hebrew Christians throughout the Roman world would now have a good explanation of their relationship to the Law, circumcision, the covenant, the Temple, and the sacrificial system. This would clear up the confusion caused by Barnabas' teaching, and answer their unbelieving Jewish critics who were using Barnabas' teaching as an excuse to blaspheme, ridicule, condemn, and persecute the Church.

Paul indeed taught some similar ideas as Barnabas, but it was not the same. And the confusion about it forced Paul to clear up those differences in his two epistles to the Romans and Hebrews. Some commentaries on Hebrews suggest that the book of *Hebrews* seems to have been written as a **corrective** to the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Hebrews has many statements which correct and **counter-balance** the extreme anti-Judaic polemic and hyper-allegorical hermeneutic of Barnabas. This idea is explored in much more detail in my forthcoming Masters Thesis (*Redating the Epistle of Barnabas*). Of course, that was not the only reason nor even the main reason why Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, but it does appear to be one of the reasons, and it fits right into the main purpose of the book.

The major reason for the epistle to the Hebrews appears to be to clarify the relationship of the Jewish Christians to the Law, the Old Covenant, the Temple, the Priesthood, and the Sacrificial system, and to show how all of that had been fulfilled by Christ at the Cross, the Resurrection, and Pentecost. Those Jewish Christians needed to have this covenant change clearly spelled out for them, so that they could successfully navigate the soon-coming passing away of their old covenantal world and the arrival of the New Jerusalem and better things in the perfect heavenly country.

At the end of the Epistle, in Hebrews 13, Paul urges those Jewish Christians to go out to Christ outside the gates of the earthly city, in order to meet with Christ in the new heavenly city that was about to come (Heb 13:13-14). While life under the Mosaic Law was good, it was not the better things that were promised under the New Covenant. The Best Things were to be found in Christ, into whom the Gentiles were also being grafted. Paul wrote the book of Romans to get the Gentiles to embrace the Jewish Christians as the natural branches of the rich olive tree into which they had been graciously allowed to partake. Those Gentiles needed to unite with their Jewish brothers and be one body of Christ. And the Jewish Christians needed to accept the Gentiles as fellow heirs of the coming kingdom.

Paul wrote the book of Hebrews to help the Jews understand the nature of that soon-coming kingdom which had been promised to them throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jewish Christians were in danger of failing to draw near to the better things that were about to arrive. Hebrews seems laser-focused on keeping the remnant of faithful believing Jews attached to the Olive Tree, as well as enticing a few more unbelieving Jews to be regrafted into the Olive Tree from which they had been cut off, so that they would not miss out on the better things that were about to arrive. Paul was trying desperately to "fill up" the full number of true Israel before the unbelieving fleshly Israelites were destroyed and their old covenantal system passed away. Paul was urging them onward, to draw near to Mount Zion, and not shrink back into Judaism and be destroyed. The better things were just about to arrive. "In a very little while, He who is coming will come." Do not be one of "those who shrink back to destruction" (Heb 10:37-

39). Persevere in Christ to inherit those better things. Paul's heart's desire was for their salvation. Everything he did as apostle to the Gentiles was to move his Jewish brethren to jealousy and thus save some of them, so that ALL (who are a part of the True) ISRAEL would be saved. The book of Hebrews appears to be his last-ditch appeal to his Jewish brethren to persevere to the arrival of the better things.

Who was the Courier for Hebrews? (AD 63)

Paul does not tell us who was the courier for the book of Hebrews, but it was almost certainly one of his fellow workers who were still there in Rome with him at the time of his release. We know who they were, since both Colossians and Philemon list them for us (Col. 4:10-14; Phm. 1:24): **Mark**, **Aristarchus**, **Justus**, **Demas**, and **Luke** (not Timothy, Epaphroditus, or Tychicus, who were already gone on other assignments). What else is interesting about this list, is that **Justus** disappears from the list somewhere between the writing of Colossians and Philemon. So, it appears that Justus was not around by the time Hebrews was sent out by courier. That leaves only Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke.

Luke stuck pretty close to Paul and did not go on any courier trips, as far as we know. Previously, on the second missionary journey, Luke had separated from Paul and stayed in Philippi for a while, as is evident from the "we" and "they" passages in the book of Acts, but Luke seems to have stuck with Paul forever after that. And Luke was still in the company of Paul in their travels after his release from Rome, since we see Luke mentioned in Paul's second letter to Timothy in late 63 (2 Tim. 4:11). So, that rules out Luke as a candidate for the Hebrews courier job.

Demas would not seem to be a good choice either, since his true apostate colors may have already been evident to Paul, so that it was no surprise to see Demas abandon Paul a year later about the time Paul was arrested the second time (2 Tim. 4:10). Evidently Demas had remained with Paul after their release from Rome, but deserted him while they were in Asia when the persecution intensified and Paul was arrested. So, Demas does not seem to be the one who carried the book of Hebrews.

Since **Aristarchus** was originally from Thessalonica (Acts 19:29 and 20:4), and Paul was planning to visit Thessalonica and Philippi after his release from Rome, there is a good chance that Aristarchus stayed with Paul and Luke until Timothy arrived, and then went with them to visit the churches, including Thessalonica where he most likely stayed after Paul, Luke, and Timothy traveled further toward Asia Minor. Luke may have stopped at Philippi or Troas (his home area?) while Paul and Timothy traveled onward toward Ephesus, where Timothy would locate, while Paul went on to Colossae.

Some have suggested that **Timothy** may have been the courier for Hebrews, or that Paul and Timothy took the book with them and delivered it personally on their way to Colossae. They probably did take a copy of Hebrews with them, but they were not the main courier for it, nor especially the courier who took it to Peter in Jerusalem. We know from both Philippians and Hebrews that Timothy traveled with Paul toward Ephesus where he was left by Paul to minister to the church there (as First and Second Timothy also show). So, Timothy could not have been the courier who took Hebrews on beyond Asia Minor to all of the other Jewish Christians in Syria, Cyprus, Phoenicia, Palestine, and Judea.

That leaves **John Mark** as the most likely candidate for the job of courier for the book of Hebrews. Notice that he is mentioned first in the list (Phm. 1:24). That does not always indicate primacy, but it does in a significant number of cases, especially in the book of Acts and in Paul's writings. Whether it had that significance here or not, is anyone's guess. Regardless of that consideration, we have eliminated all the others on the list, leaving Mark as the only choice left. But he would have been my first choice anyway, even before eliminating the others, for the following reasons:

Paul and Barnabas split up and went their separate ways after Paul refused to take Mark with them on the second missionary journey (AD 50). Paul chose Silas and was sent on his way by the Antioch church. However, **Barnabas took Mark** and sailed away to his home island of Cyprus (Acts 15:39). From that point on, **Barnabas** disappears from the NT historical record, except for a brief mention in 1 Cor. 9:6, indicating that he was still alive and doing mission work at the time First Corinthians was written in AD 57. Evidently his work was confined mostly to the island of Cyprus, except for the trip he made to Corinth and some other churches (possibly including Rome, according to tradition).

Mark likewise disappears from the New Testament historical narrative after Barnabas took him to Cyprus in AD 50 (Acts 15:39). Mark apparently worked with Barnabas there on Cyprus for the whole decade, from AD 50 until Barnabas' death in AD 60 or 61. The next mention of Mark was when he joined Paul in Rome in AD 61-62 (Col. 4:10; Phm 1:24). Mark did not travel with Paul after his release from Rome, but took a different route, as is implied by Paul's mention of him when he told the Colossians that

Mark might come through their area ("if he comes to you, welcome him" – Col. 4:10). Colossians was on one of the major Roman highways that stretched from Ephesus through Turkey to Antioch. There is a good chance that Mark would have traveled through Colossae if he delivered the epistle of Hebrews to some of the Pauline churches in Turkey (many of which lay along that Roman trade route). The next time Mark appeared was when Peter mentioned him being in Jerusalem in AD 63 (1 Pet. 5:13). That implies that Mark carried the epistle of Hebrews with him when he left Rome and evidently headed toward Judea, via the Roman trade route in Turkey. Paul mentions him again during his second imprisonment in Rome just before Paul's martyrdom in late 63 or early 64 (2 Tim. 4:11).

So it seems almost certain that **John Mark** was the courier for the book of Hebrews, and carried it to the rest of the churches beyond Paul's sphere of influence, such as Cyprus, Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, Judea, and perhaps even to Alexandria also.

Mark's Courier Trip With Hebrews (AD 63)

The connections between the book of Hebrews and the Epistle of Barnabas not only provide insight into one of the purposes for the book of Hebrews (i.e., to "correct" the Epistle of Barnabas), but they may also show why Paul chose **Mark** as the courier for Hebrews.

Mark evidently took a copy of **Hebrews** to Peter in Jerusalem, since Peter's second epistle (AD 64) shows awareness of the eschatological contents of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews (2 Pet. 3:15-16; cf. Heb. 12:18-29 and 13:13-14). **Mark** is the most likely candidate for that courier job, since Hebrews may have been written (at least in part) to correct the *Epistle of Barnabas*, which Mark brought to Paul in Rome after Barnabas was killed on Cyprus (AD 60-61). Mark would certainly have had a vested interest in how the book of Hebrews was spread to all the churches where Paul and Barnabas had labored, especially if it was, in fact, correcting some of the contents of the *Epistle of Barnabas* (his cousin and fellow worker on Cyprus). And since Mark was with Paul during the whole time he was writing Hebrews, he would have understood the book well, and would have been the perfect courier to deliver it to those churches throughout Syria, Turkey, Macedonia, and Greece.

We can be sure that Paul would have wanted Mark to take a copy to Peter in Jerusalem, and that Mark would have welcomed the opportunity to visit his home church in Jerusalem. This may explain why Hebrews seems to address the saints in Jerusalem (Heb. 13:10-16). It also explains how Mark happened to be in Jerusalem at the time Peter wrote his first epistle in late 63 where he mentions Mark being there with him (1 Pet. 5:13). Then Mark may have served as Peter's courier to take his first epistle back to all of the same churches in Syria, Turkey, Macedonia, and Greece that Mark had passed through on his way to Jerusalem.

This would have been a perfect way to bring the churches established by the Apostle to the Gentiles (Paul) into closer contact with the Apostle to the Circumcision (Peter), and thus unite all the churches into one body, both Jew and Gentile, just as Paul had prayed in Rom 9-11 and Eph 4.

Other Events Occurring in AD 63-64

Feb 63 – "great earthquakes" – The city of Pompeii was again devastated by another earthquake on Feb. 5, AD 63. Sixteen years later it would be completely buried by the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius (AD 79). There were other massive earthquakes throughout the Roman Empire during the whole period from AD 30 until AD 70. It appears that the "birth pangs" (Mt 24:7-8) are becoming more frequent and more intense as we get closer to the outbreak of the war in AD 66. It is also worth noting that Apostle Paul was in Rome (north of Campania) at the time of this earthquake in Feb 63. He probably felt some of the tremors of it. Here is what some of the various commentaries have to say about the earthquakes occurring at this time:

J. Marcellus Kik: "And as to earthquakes, many are mentioned by the writers during a period just previous to 70 A.D. there were earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colossae, Campania, Rome, and Judea. It is interesting to note that the city of Pompeii was much damaged by an earthquake...Feb. 5, 63 AD" (*An Eschatology of Victory*, p. 93). See also Dr. Lardner, in his *Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion*, first published 1764–'67, also in vol. vi. of his Works, ed. by Kippis, London 1838.

Barnes Notes on Matthew 24:7 – Many of these [earthquakes] are mentioned as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudius, at Rome; and says that, in the reign of Nero, the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, were overthrown; and the celebrated Pompeii was overwhelmed, and almost destroyed by an earthquake, **Annals, 15, 22**. Others are mentioned as occurring at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, and Samos.

Clarke's Commentary on Matthew 24:7 – …earthquakes, there were several in those times to which our Lord refers; particularly one at Crete in the reign of Claudius, one at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos. **See Grotius**. One at Rome, mentioned by **Tacitus**; and one at Laodicea in the reign of Nero, in which the city was overthrown, as were likewise Hierapolis and Colossae. See **Tacit. *Annals* lib. xii. and lib. xiv**. One at Campania, mentioned by **Seneca [***Ad Lucilium Epist. Morales***]**; and one at Rome, in the reign of Galba, mentioned by **Suetonius** in the life of that emperor. Add to all these, a dreadful one in Judea, mentioned by **Josephus (*War* 4.286)** accompanied by a dreadful tempest, violent winds, vehement showers, and continual lightnings and thunders; which led many to believe that these things portended some uncommon calamity [AD 68]:

> ***War* 4:286** (4.4.5) for there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and **amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth**, that was in an **earthquake**.
> ***War* 4:287** (4.4.5) These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders **foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming**.

Fourfold Gospel (Harmony of the Gospels by McGarvey and Pendleton) comments on Matthew 24:7 – Great natural disturbances would constitute the third sign. That these preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, there is abundant historic evidence. **Alford** enumerates the earthquakes as follows: 1. A great earthquake in **Crete**, AD 46 or 47. 2. One at **Rome** when Nero assumed the manly toga, A.D. 51. 3. One at **Apamaea** in Phrygia, mentioned by **Tacitus**, A.D. 53. 4. One at **Laodicea** in Phrygia, A.D. 60. 5. One in **Campania**, A.D. 62 or 63. There were an indefinite number of **famines** referred to by Roman writers, and at least one **pestilence** during which thirty thousand perished in Rome alone. All these signs are mentioned by unbelieving writers such as **Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Philostratus, and Seneca**, who speak of them because of their importance and not with any reference to the prophecy of Christ.

Earthquakes in Crete (AD 47), Rome (AD 51), Apamaea (AD 53), Laodicea (AD 60). Seneca mentioned quakes in Turkey (incl. Smyrna) (in AD 65). [Seneca *Ad Lucilium Epist. Morales*]

AD 63 – Daughter born to Nero and Poppaea. Nero was the last of the Caesarean bloodline to rule. He had no sons. His wife Poppaea gave birth to a daughter (Claudia) in AD 63, who died less than four months later. It is known that Poppaea was pregnant again in March of AD 65, when Nero in a fit of rage physically assaulted her, which caused her death soon afterwards along with the death of her unborn child. Nero died childless, the last of the Julio-Claudian dynasty of rulers.

AD 62-64 – Agrippa II rebuilt Caesarea Philippi and renamed it Neronias. He also built a theater at Berytus.

AD 62-64 – Ananias b. Nedebaeus seized tithes by force and gave very little of them to his fellow priests. He used it to buy and bribe his way into more and more control of the affairs in Jerusalem. This is the guy who presided over Paul's trial in Jerusalem, the very one who ordered Paul to be struck in the mouth, and the one to whom Paul said, "God is about to strike you, you whitewashed wall." Just as Paul predicted, he was one of the first casualties of the Zealots soon after the revolt began (AD 66). His sons had tremendous power and influence as well. For instance, his son Eleazar was Captain (Sagan) of the Temple guard (second in command only to the High Priest). And it was this Eleazar who played the major role in instigating the revolt and orchestrating it from his strategic headquarters in the temple. We will say a lot more about Eleazar when we get to AD 66 and the outbreak of the war.

AD 62-64 – Costobarus and Saulus (relatives of Agrippa II) assembled a band of robbers to plunder "those that were weaker than themselves." Josephus then says, "And from that time it principally came to pass, that our city was greatly disordered, and that all things grew worse and worse among us" [*Antiq*. 20.214 (20.9.4)]. It is therefore not surprising that this is the very time when the books of Revelation and Hebrews were advising the Christians to get out of Judea and Jerusalem (the Neronic persecution was just about to strike).

Paul's Activity After His Release (AD 63-64)

How to Do Historical Reconstruction (i.e., educated guesswork): There are a lot of historical and geographical facts scattered throughout Paul's epistles and the book of Acts, which we can use to reconstruct the sequence of events. Several chronological works on Paul were consulted, plus maps, atlases and timelines. A special Excel chart was constructed which shows the locations and movements of Paul and his fellow workers throughout his missionary journeys. J. B. Lightfoot's essays on Paul's travels after the close of Acts, Arthur Ogden's chronology, Frank Viola's theories, as well as about a half dozen others, including two different harmonies of Paul's life and travels were used as well.

One of the prime reasons why Paul did not spell out all the details of his travel plans, seems to be because it was not safe to do so. There were Jewish persecutors stalking him everywhere he went, especially after he was released from his first Roman imprisonment. That is why he sent his letters via couriers who could fill in the details verbally after they safely arrived at those churches. That lack of detail in his epistles makes it very difficult to construct a *definite* itinerary. All we can do is lay out the facts that Paul gives us and compose some *possible* theories that harmonize with those facts.

Mar 63 – Paul was released just a year and a half before the Neronic persecution broke out in the Summer of AD 64, and only three and a half years before the Jewish war with Rome began in the Summer of AD 66. They were getting close to the end. The birth pangs (signs of the times) were becoming more frequent and intense.

Mar 63 – Did Paul visit Jerusalem after his release from Rome? It is not likely that Paul went back to visit the Hebrew communities in Judea as some have suggested, based on the statements in Heb. 13:18-23 (see below). He knew there were at least forty Jews in Jerusalem who had taken a vow to kill him. He would have been immediately killed if he went back there. However, it does seem that he did visit some of the churches in his own network in Italy, Greece, Macedonia, and Turkey.

Furthermore, Paul was not one to change his plans. He had been accused of fickleness before (see 2 Cor. 1:17), and was very defensive about it. In his other prison epistles (Eph, Col, Phm, and Php) that were written just before Hebrews, Paul does not mention any plans to visit Judea, but instead states that he intended to visit Philippi on his way to Colossae where he planned to stay for a while, probably in preparation for a missionary trip to Spain (see Rom. 15:24, 28, written in AD 58 just before his arrest and imprisonment). Thus, his travel plans after release from Roman imprisonment were restricted to Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor. There are no hints of a trip to Judea. Colossae seems to be as far away from Rome as he planned to go, before he began his missionary journey to Spain. So it seems more likely that Paul kept to his original plan of going to Colossae to stay with Philemon for a while after his release from imprisonment.

This immediately raises the question: If Paul had no intentions of visiting the Jewish saints in Judea, then how do we explain the language in Hebrews 13:18-23 which sounds like he planned to visit them:

> Pray for us... so **that I may be restored to you the sooner**. ...[13:23] Take notice that our brother **Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you**. [Heb. 13:18-23 NAS95 boldface added]

The only way I can conceive of Paul going back to Judea would be if he: (1) totally abandoned his plans to go to Spain contrary to his originally stated intentions, and (2) kept his plans to go to Judea totally secret so that his enemies would not know about it in advance. He surely would not have given them advance notice, as he does here in Hebrews, so that his enemies would be waiting for him. It

would be especially dangerous to mention any plans to travel to Judea in this Hebrews letter, which he knew would ultimately end up in the hands of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, some of whom (the Judaizers) could easily leak his travel plans to his unbelieving Jewish enemies.

Therefore, it is more likely that these statements here in Heb. 13:18-23 were only directed toward the same Diaspora Jewish Christians to whom his prison epistles had just been addressed (Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor). He was indeed planning to visit them soon, as we know from his other prison epistles. The courier (Mark) would have made that clear when he delivered Hebrews to the various Christian communities through which he traveled on his way from Rome to Jerusalem.

The vast majority of the epistle applied to all Jewish Christians inside and outside Judea, while these closing statements in Heb 13:18-25 (which were added to the otherwise finished book just before it was sent by courier) applied only to the saints in Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor whom Paul was planning to visit after his release. When the courier (Mark) delivered the epistle of Hebrews to the other churches beyond Asia Minor (such as Syria and Palestine), he would simply have explained that Heb 13:18-25 applied only to the churches in Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor.

We know from *Philippians* that Paul intended to travel with Timothy to visit the church in Philippi after his release (Php. 2:19-24). That was the same trip during which he planned to go to Colossae.

We must also remember that the bulk of the message in the book of Hebrews is directed toward all Jewish Christians both inside Palestine, and in the Diaspora especially, who were being tempted by the Judaizers and Zealots to forsake Christ and return to Judaism to support the Jewish cause against Rome. The persecution was beginning to heat up and Jewish Christians were under a lot of pressure.

However, if the courier for the Hebrews epistle was **Mark**, as we are suggesting, then it would make total sense for the book of Hebrews to be directed toward all Hebrew Christians (both inside Palestine and outside in the Diaspora). Paul would have written it with Mark in mind as the courier, knowing that Mark would take it to all the churches in Greece, Macedonia, Turkey, Syria, and Palestine. The epistle to the **Hebrews** was a general encyclical that would make the rounds of all the churches, especially on the eastern side of the Roman world. This would explain why the book of Hebrews appears to address the churches in Judea, and how they would get a copy of it without Paul having to go there to deliver it.

We know that Paul planned to spend some significant time with Philemon in Colossae after his release (Phm. 1:22). Then after staying there for several months and raising funds for his trip to Spain, he planned to travel to Nicopolis for the Winter (where he would be able to catch the first boat for Spain in the Spring).

Paul said in **Philemon** that his plan after release was to go to Colossae and stay with Philemon ("At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you." Phm 1:22). While we do not know for sure the exact route he planned to take, nor how long he would spend at each of those cities, we do know that Philippi was one of the stops along the way, since he says in **Philippians** that he hoped to visit them with Timothy after they were released. And we know that Paul hoped to go to Spain, and that he intended to get help from the various churches in Asia, Macedonia, and Greece to make that journey. It seems from his letter to **Titus** that he also planned to spend the Winter in Nicopolis before going to Spain (Tit. 3:12). However, it does not seem that he was ever able to make that journey. It appears that he was arrested before he reached Nicopolis. We will discuss more about this when we deal with the book of Second Timothy.

The last chapter of the book of Hebrews, therefore, must mean that Paul planned to visit the Hebrew Christian communities in Greece and Turkey as soon as he was released. Colossae (where Philemon was preparing his lodging) was a good example of a church which had many Diaspora Jewish Christians. This seems to be the very same Diaspora Hebrew Christians to whom the books of Hebrews, James and 1 and 2 Peter were written. This was Paul's last missionary journey to stabilize the Hebrew Christians during that time of intense persecution (AD 62-66) when many of them were falling away and going back into Judaism. His visit to these Jewish Christians in Greece and Turkey was also for the purpose of raising funds for his trip to Spain.

Mar 63 – Paul's travel plans after his release from Roman imprisonment. We know from Paul's epistle to the Romans that he ultimately intended to do mission work in Spain (Rom 15:24, 28). It appears that he still had that plan after his release from his first Roman imprisonment. From his epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, it seems that he planned to visit them right after his release in order to raise funds for his trip to Spain the following Spring. In those prison epistles, Paul stated that he planned to go to Philippi (Macedonia) after his release, but we do not know if that was his first

destination, or merely one of his stops along the way. From the tidbits of information that Paul gives us in his three pastoral epistles, it appears that Paul did not go to Macedonia first, but rather took a circular route through *Crete, Corinth, Miletus, Colossae, Ephesus, Troas, Philippi*, and then back to *Corinth, Miletus*, and *Asia*.

Apr 63 – Paul left Rome with Timothy and Titus and went to **Crete** where he left Titus to organize the churches there. Then Paul and Timothy moved on, probably to **Corinth** first to give them advance warning about his intentions to come back through there later to raise funds for his trip to Spain. Then they went to **Colossae** to stay with Philemon as Paul had originally planned. It seems most likely that Paul wrote the ***Epistle to Titus*** while he was in Corinth, before going to Colossae, but it could have been written from Colossae, if Paul stayed there long enough. Paul wrote Titus about his plan to spend the Winter at Nicopolis, in order to travel to Spain in the Spring. Evidently that Winter in Nicopolis and the trip to Spain never materialized. Paul was arrested again and sent to Rome "before Winter".

Apr 63 – Titus was in Crete when Paul wrote this epistle to him. It was probably written in the Spring or early Summer of AD 63, not long after Paul had left Titus in Crete. It seems to have been written before or about the same time as the 1 Timothy letter. It was most likely written from Colossae or Ephesus, after Paul had rejoined Artemas or Tychicus who were waiting for him in Colossae. Paul was NOT in prison at the time of writing. Paul planned to send Artemas or Tychicus to Crete, so that Titus could come to Paul in Nicopolis for the Winter. It is possible that one of these two couriers (Artemas or Tychicus) carried the letter to Titus. In 2 Timothy Paul says that Tychicus was sent to Ephesus, so that implies that Artemas was probably sent to Crete. Paul was planning to spend the Winter in Nicopolis, so it sounds like this letter was written in the late Spring or very early Summer when he would have begun making plans for the Winter. All the evidence points to this being the first Winter after his release (late 63 and early 64). Paul would not have spent over a year and a half raising funds to go to Spain. He would have made a quick visit to those churches before Winter and then gone to Nicopolis to catch the first boat to Spain in the Spring.

There were three cities with the name of **Nicopolis** (Greece, Turkey, and Palestine). It is most likely that Paul would have spent the Winter at the Nicopolis in Greece so as to be ready to take the first ship out to Spain in the Spring. The Nicopolis in Greece (near where the battle of Actium occurred) was right on the western coast, and was a perfect place from which to ship out to Spain. It seems certain that Paul never made it to Nicopolis, and was arrested in Asia either on his way toward, or in Troas, where he intended to pick up his cloak and books and head to Nicopolis for the Winter. Unfortunately that Winter in Nicopolis (Winter of 63-64) never materialized. Paul was arrested before he got there. His plans to go to Spain were canceled by that arrest.

Paul told Titus that Zenas (the lawyer) and Apollos (the orator) were coming to Crete, and Paul asked Titus to help them on their way to wherever they were going. We suggest below that they might have been traveling to Patmos to get John released from exile. They probably had helped Paul get released, and they may have obtained release papers for John while they were in Rome. Paul does not say where he was when he wrote (probably for security reasons, in case the letter was intercepted by Jewish persecutors). But there was still a lot of freedom to travel, which would not have been the case after the great fire in Rome and Nero's persecution began. Nicopolis would not have been a safe place for a Christian to spend the Winter after the Neronic persecution broke out (late 64). So it seems that the epistle of Titus was written in the Spring of AD 63.

May 63 – Possible release of John from exile in Patmos (after only one year there, during which time he wrote the book of Revelation). Something I find extremely intriguing is Paul's statement to Titus about *Zenas* (the lawyer) and *Apollos* (the orator) planning to travel through Crete, and go on their way to some other place. Paul instructs Titus to *"diligently help them on their way so that nothing was lacking for them"* (Tit. 3:13). It is possible that they had been in Rome to help Paul in his defense before Nero, and that their work on his behalf was successful. Zenas and Apollos were on a mission of some kind. What would a lawyer and an orator most likely be trying to accomplish? And where were they going after visiting Titus in Crete? Titus was instructed to diligently help them with funds for their journey. One of the possible next stops on a boat from Crete would be Ephesus (near Patmos).

Who else was in prison in the region, who might need the services of Zenas and Apollos? *Apostle John* was in exile on the nearby island of Patmos! It would make perfect sense for Zenas and Apollos,

who helped Paul get released from his imprisonment, and now armed with Paul's release documents to use as a precedent, to go to Patmos to secure John's release. They were definitely on a mission, for which they needed significant funding, and the small island of Patmos was only a short boat ride away from the island of Crete. If this is the case, it would explain how John could have been released from Patmos after being there for only about a year, during which time he had written the book of Revelation. When released (Spring or Summer of AD 63), he probably settled in nearby Ephesus, as tradition suggests, and was still residing there over a year later when the Neronic persecution broke out, at which time he was "killed by Jews" as Papias in the second century has affirmed (*Apostolic Fathers*, Michael W. Holmes, Baker Books: *Papias* 5:5; 6:6). Origen also agreed with this (*Papias* 6:6).

John could not have been killed by the Jews after AD 70, since their power to kill anyone had been taken away from them. They themselves were under the ban of Rome. So, if John was "killed by Jews" as Papias affirms, it must have been before the war broke out in AD 66, at a time when the Jews would have had the permission of Rome to kill Christians (i.e., during the Neronic persecution, AD 64-66). Papias claims that the death of John at the hands of the Jews was in fulfillment of the prediction of Jesus recorded in the gospel accounts of both Matthew (20) and Mark (10).

It is also possible that John could have already been released from his exile on Patmos after Ananus II was deposed from the High Priesthood in the Summer of 62. However, since Ananus II had not died, John would not have been allowed to return to Judea. So, the tradition about him going to nearby Ephesus after his release may have some substance, and could have occurred at that very point in late 62 right after John had written the book of Revelation there on the island of Patmos. This would have given John almost two full years to live in Ephesus before the Neronic persecution broke out in late 64.

May 63 – After Paul and Timothy left Corinth, they evidently headed toward **Colossae**, where they met up with Tychicus and Artemas, who had remained in Colossae preparing for Paul's arrival. It does not seem that Paul stayed in Colossae for very long (a few weeks at most, if at all). Since Colossae is one of the churches of Asia, about whom Paul later said, "all who are in Asia turned away from him," the possibility exists that Philemon did not welcome him and provide lodging for him as he had hoped. Then Paul headed back toward **Ephesus** to drop off Timothy, and then on up the western coast of Turkey toward Troas and onward to Philippi.

June 63 – After arriving at **Troas**, he left his cloak, books, and parchments with Carpus, and headed off to **Philippi in Macedonia**, intending to come back through Troas later and pick up his belongings before he headed to Nicopolis for the Winter. The church at Philippi was always faithful. He could count on them to supply some of his needs for his missionary trip to Spain.

June 63 – 1 Timothy was probably written while Paul was in Philippi. It seems to have been written not long after the letter to Titus. Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy) who was in Ephesus. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus while Paul traveled onward to Macedonia. Paul was not in prison at this time, but he does not say where he was when he wrote it (probably for security reasons). The tribulation was already underway and heating up (AD 63-64), so it is not surprising to see Paul give so few details about his location and travel plans.

Mark's Activities After Hebrews Was Delivered (AD 63-64)

We noted earlier that Paul would have wanted Mark to take a copy of his book of Hebrews to Peter in Jerusalem, and that Mark would have relished that opportunity to visit his home church in Jerusalem. This explains how Mark happened to be in Jerusalem at the time Peter wrote his first epistle in late 63 where he mentioned Mark being there with him (1 Pet. 5:13). Then Mark may have served as Peter's courier to take his first epistle back to all of the same churches in Syria, Turkey, Macedonia, and Greece that Mark had passed through on his way to Jerusalem.

We can see the Divine hand of providence at work here in all of Mark's travels on behalf of Paul and Peter. Both apostles were anxious to *unite all Jewish and Gentile Christians into one body* of followers of Christ. This courier work of Mark was very instrumental in bringing all those churches into closer fellowship, not only with each other, but with the mother church in Jerusalem especially. This was the

very unity for which not only Christ had prayed (John 17:20-21), but for which the apostles had anxiously and tirelessly labored (Eph 4; Rom 9-11; 1 Pet 1:22; 2:9-12; 4:3-4; 2 Pet 1:1; 3:11-18; Acts 10; 15; 21:24-25), and it seems to have been achieved right there at the moment when the Neronic persecution was about to strike, during which Paul, John, and Peter were probably killed. In the passages just listed, we can clearly see both Paul and Peter striving hard to establish and maintain unity among both the Jewish and Gentile saints, and thus unite all the churches into one body composed of all nations.

While Mark was on that courier trip for Peter, Paul was arrested and sent to Rome the second time. In prison, Paul was aware of Mark being back in the region of Asia, so he wanted Timothy to bring Mark with him to join Luke and him there in Rome (2 Tim. 4:11). We do not know if that reunion ever took place. Paul and Luke may have been killed before Timothy and Mark ever arrived, or Timothy and Mark could have been killed before they got to Rome. If they were in Rome when the Neronic persecution broke out, they would have been killed along with Paul and the other saints there.

The only thing we know for certain is that the Neronic persecution killed a **"great multitude"** of the remaining Christians (Rev. 7:9-17 and Matt. 24:21-22), including the apostles Paul, John, and Peter, and most of their fellow workers. That is why there were no more NT books written after AD 64. The apostles and their fellow workers were either dead, or in hiding. It would not have been safe to write any more epistles. It would have exposed the writer, the courier, and the recipients to mortal danger. Plus, most of the churches were devastated by that persecution, and either wiped out completely, or forced into hiding. There were few writers left, few couriers left, and few Christians left. As John indicates in the book of Revelation (22:11), right there at the end (AD 64-66) it was no longer safe to continue literary and missionary activity. No one would listen because it was an outlawed religion. Evangelism would only get you killed. That is why Rev 22:11 says, "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy..." Christ instructed them at that point to leave the unbelievers alone if they wanted to "live and remain until the Parousia."

After Mark connected with Peter in Jerusalem in late 63, he evidently took Peter's first epistle with him to revisit those same churches in Syria, Cyprus, Turkey, Macedonia, and Greece whom he had just visited on his way to Jerusalem. Evidently he was still on that courier trip somewhere in the vicinity of Ephesus when Paul was arrested the second time and sent to Rome for execution (AD 63-64). Paul requested Timothy to bring Mark with him to come to Paul, and bring the books and parchments with him (2 Tim. 4:11). Mark would be useful to Paul for service of some kind, probably scribal and courier service, like he had done during Paul's first imprisonment, a year or two earlier.

After that reunion with Paul, Luke, and Timothy in Rome, where did Mark go? Alexandria perhaps? It is certainly possible. He might have thought that would be a safe place to hide during the Neronic persecution, but it really was not. According to tradition, he died in Egypt near Alexandria.

First Epistle of Peter (July 63)

July 63 – <u>1 Peter</u> was written while Peter was in Jerusalem at a time when Jerusalem was already known by the code-name “Babylon” (1 Pet. 5:13). Since this implies a probable acquaintance with the book of Revelation, we can place First Peter here (Late 63) after John had written the Apocalypse (probably late 62) and before the Neronic persecution broke out (late 64).

The reason I favor June of 63 as the date for First Peter is because it gives Mark three months to travel from Rome through Turkey and Syria to be in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost (June). After Pentecost would also have been a great time to send couriers back out again. And we do find Mark back in western Turkey (Asia) two or three months after this (when Paul was arrested).

Mark was with Peter in Jerusalem at the time First Peter was written. Mark had been with Paul in Rome in AD 62-63, but now he is back in Jerusalem with Peter. 1 Pet 5:12-13 can imply that Mark stayed there with Peter while Silvanus (Silas) took Peter's first epistle to all those churches. Or, Mark may have gone with Silas on that Courier trip. Or, Mark could have taken the trip by himself without Silas. Note that Peter recommends Silvanus to the readers as if Silas might need that endorsement for his courier work. We have to wonder why Peter included this endorsement for Silas if Silas was not the courier for this letter. This is the same Silas who traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey for the purpose of verifying the results of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). So, Silas would have been known to some of those churches to which the letter was going, but not known to all of them. Silas was a devout Jewish Christian, circumcised and keeping the Law, even though he was also very committed

to Gentile freedom from the Law. He would have been a perfect courier to take Peter's letter to those Diaspora churches which had a mixture of Jews and Gentiles in them. He would have been well-received by both Jews and Gentiles. Since Peter was writing to Gentiles and Jews both, this was very important for the sake of getting both Jewish and Gentile Christians to accept each other and become one united body of believers.

Mark was the courier for both Paul and Peter to all the churches. Mark evidently brought a copy of the book of Hebrews to Peter, since Peter shows acquaintance with it in his second epistle). This explains how Peter was aware of "all Paul's epistles" including the book of Hebrews (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Peter wrote to the Christians in the Diaspora (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, and perhaps also including Macedonia and Achaia) which implies that he was writing from Judea (which was not the Diaspora). John Mark was probably Peter's courier to deliver his letters to the Diaspora churches. Mark was in Rome when Paul wrote his epistles (Colossians 4:10, Philemon 1:24) to those same churches in the Diaspora, so it seems that Mark could have been the courier to take Peter's letter back to them.

Evidently Mark was good at this courier service, and explains why both Paul and Peter used him in that capacity. I believe this is why Paul told Timothy to bring Mark with him to Rome, in order to provide that "courier" service to Paul once again in his final hour. It seems that John Mark may be a key piece of the puzzle in determining when 1 Peter was written, especially since he is mentioned by both Peter here in 1 Pet. 5:13, and by Paul (Col. 4:10, Phm. 1:24 and 2 Tim. 4:11).

The mention of Mark in 2 Timothy is the better one to focus on. At the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy, Mark was somewhere close to Timothy (near Ephesus), perhaps carrying Peter's first epistle with him. This would mean that 1 Peter would have been written before Paul's second arrest (Summer of 63), and before the Neronic persecution broke out. Another reason why the late-63 date of First Peter is attractive to me is because 2 Pet. 3:1 mentions Peter's first letter in a way that suggests that it was written not too long before the second letter (within a year or less). That would allow for an early-64 date of Second Peter. Also in both 1 Pet. 1:7 and 4:12 Peter mentions the "tested by fire" and "fiery ordeal among you" and that the devil was "prowling around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). This intensity of persecution suggests a time during the three and a half years of "short time" (AD 62-66) when Satan had been released to hunt down Christians and deceive the Jews into going to war with Rome. John had been exiled to Patmos at the beginning of that tribulation. The intensity of Peter's language ("end of all things is near" and "she who is in Babylon" and "it is time for judgment to begin") suggests that Peter was writing in the middle of that tribulation period (AD 63) when things were beginning to heat up. The Jews in Judea were looking for every opportunity to attack and devour the Christians after the arrest of James and his companions (AD 62), and Nero was just about to unleash his great persecution (Aug 64). The fact that Peter refers to Jerusalem as "Babylon" (1 Pet 5:13) suggests that he had already read the book of Revelation (written in the Summer of 62). Somewhere in mid-to-late 63 would be a good date for First Peter. This would mean that it was written somewhere between the book of Revelation (late AD 62) and the outbreak of the Neronian persecution (Aug 64).

Mark was evidently the courier link between Peter (Jerusalem), Paul (Rome) and John (Patmos-Asia), which would explain how the NT "books and parchments" were circulated and collected into a finished canon before AD 70. Mark provided courier service to Paul by bringing copies of Paul's prison epistles (including Hebrews) back to Peter (thus completing Peter's collection of all Paul's epistles, except for the last three Pastoral epistles (1 Tim, Titus, 2 Tim), which were written after Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment. Mark was with Peter when 1 Peter was written in Jerusalem. And Mark was in Turkey or Greece when Paul wrote 2 Timothy. So I tend to think that Mark took Hebrews back to Peter in the Summer 63 after Paul's release, and then Peter wrote 1 Peter in the Summer or early Fall of 63 so that Mark could deliver it to all the Diaspora churches about the time Paul was arrested the second time and sent to Rome for trial and execution.

This would mean that Mark was probably the courier for Peter's first letter to the Diaspora churches, and explains why Mark was in the region of Greece and Turkey at the time Paul was arrested again (in late 63). This also helps us understand what Paul meant when he told Timothy (2 Tim. 4:11) to bring Mark with him when he came to Paul in prison, because Mark is "useful to Paul for [scribal and courier] service." What service was Mark performing for Paul? Timothy was also bringing the "books and parchments" with him. If Paul was going to be martyred shortly, what would happen to those "books and parchments"? Would they be given to Mark and Timothy for safe-keeping and collection as a

canon to be copied and circulated among all the churches wherever Mark and Timothy went? One of the reasons Paul does not spell any of this out in his letters is because those letters could easily fall into the wrong hands and increase the persecution against those who were carrying the letters, as well as those to whom the letters were sent. So it was for security reasons that the details are left out during this time of intense persecution. But there are enough facts given that the careful student can read between the lines and reconstruct it.

On the basis of the 2 Timothy evidence and the "fiery" persecution statements in First Peter, it seems that First Peter was written in the middle of the great tribulation (June 63), a year before the Neronic persecution began. It seems that Mark then carried that first epistle of Peter to the Diaspora churches in the Summer of 63, and was in the region of Asia Minor (western Turkey) at the time Paul was arrested the second time (Summer of 63). Paul's mention of Mark being in that region in 2 Timothy is the basis for this June 63 date of 1 Peter. Also, since 1 Peter 5 mentions "Babylon", it implies that Peter had seen the book of Revelation before he wrote 1 Peter. The Neronic persecution had not broken out yet, so that fixes the date range somewhere between March 63 when Mark left Rome going toward Jerusalem, and Mark's presence back in Turkey at the time of Paul's arrest (Sept 63). June 63 would be right in the middle of that range, giving him three months to get to Jerusalem, and three more months to get back to Turkey.

As we mentioned, **1 Peter** appears to have been written in the Summer of 63. It could have been written later in mid-64 just before the Neronic persecution broke out, depending on the length of Mark's courier work after he left Rome, and when he might have arrived in Jerusalem to be with Peter at the time of writing. Did he go straight to Peter in Jerusalem, or did he go by land through Turkey, Syria, and Palestine? How long did it take him to get to Jerusalem? Is this Mark's first visit to Jerusalem after leaving Rome, or is it his second one? If we knew the answers to those questions, we would know when this book was written. As it is, we will have to look closely at the contents of the book to see if it provides any clues to help us.

Internal Evidence of 1 Peter for its Date

NOTE: *You will want to open your Bible to First Peter and follow along as we look at the following comments on the text:*

1:1 – Peter wrote to the Christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia – the very churches Mark had just visited, and was soon to revisit in his courier service for Peter. The letter was written at a time when such travel and courier service was still possible and relatively safe, and when churches in Turkey were still able to function out in the open without immediate arrest and death.

1:6-9 – Peter alludes to a "little while" of persecution ("distressed by various trials" and "tested by fire") that the churches in Turkey were having to endure at the present time when this epistle was written. This does not seem to be the Neronic persecution, since couriers were still traveling and churches were still out in the open. However, if the intensity of the Neronic persecution was significantly diminished in the outlying provinces of the empire, it might allow for this letter to have been written during the Neronic persecution. That is a possibility that can be left open for now. However, I think 1 Peter was written about a year before the Neronic persecution broke out, while the persecution was heating up, especially there in Turkey (as we saw in connection with Paul and his second arrest there in Asia). If we assume that Mark went through Turkey on his way to Jerusalem, and that shortly he would be taking this first epistle of Peter back to those same churches in Turkey, then it makes a lot of sense to date this letter sometime between Mark's leaving Rome (March 63) and his presence back in Turkey at the time Paul was in prison again (Sept 63).

1:3-13 – Notice the expectations that Peter gave to that group of Christians scattered throughout those five provinces of Turkey:

(1:4-5) there was an imperishable **inheritance** and **salvation** that was reserved in heaven for them, and was ready to be **revealed to them** – this "revealed to them" language would not make sense if it is talking about dead people who were already in the unseen realm with Christ. It is talking about those saints who live and remain until the Parousia at which time they would see Christ revealed from heaven bringing this salvation with Him. They would see that salvation revealed to them. This revelation language makes no sense if it does not mean that they would see it revealed. Why does

Peter even use the word "revealed" if they were not going to **see** it "revealed," nor even know it happened? Is Peter giving them false expectations? This language implies that there would be a significant number of saints left alive there in Turkey at the time of the Parousia, who would see their inheritance and salvation "revealed to them".

(1:6-9) they were to rejoice during the persecution knowing that their suffering and distress would result in **praise and glory and honor** at the **revelation** of Jesus Christ, when they would "**obtain the salvation of their souls.**" How in the world would they know that they received that praise, glory, and honor, if they did not see it revealed to them at the "revelation of Jesus"? They were promised that they would obtain the salvation of their souls at the revelation of Jesus. Question: What is this salvation of their souls? Peter is writing to faithful Christians who were already saved by the blood of Christ. What was this additional "salvation of their souls" that they would obtain at the revelation of Jesus? And did they "obtain" it at the Parousia, like Peter promised here? Did they know they got it? Did they experience that "salvation of their souls" in any cognitive way? Did it result in their praising God and glorifying Him on that day when it was revealed from heaven? *Do you catch the power of that?*

(1:13) But wait, there's more! Look at verse 13 here. Peter tells these persecuted saints in Turkey to "fix their hope completely on the grace to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Again, we have to ask: What does the word "revelation" mean if no one saw Him revealed? Why does Peter even use this word "revelation" if they were not going to see Jesus revealed at the Parousia? Notice what would happen at this revelation: "the grace would be brought to them." Wait a minute, I thought these were Christians who already had the grace of God in their lives. What is this additional kind of grace that was going to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ? Did they receive that grace at the Parousia? Did they know they got it? Did they see Jesus revealed and see Him bringing that grace to them? Do you see the kind of expectations that Peter is giving to these dear persecuted saints in Turkey? They were expecting to see, hear, experience, and receive some things at the Parousia. Did they get those things? Did they know they got them? If not, why don't we hear them complaining about it afterwards? And if they did receive those things, why don't we hear them glorifying God and praising His Holy Name and exulting over their persecutors afterwards? Do you see the problem here? We don't hear them either complaining about the non-fulfillment of their expectations, or bragging about the glorious things they saw, heard, experienced and received at the Parousia. All we hear is deafening silence and absence afterwards. How do we explain that silence, especially in view of the fact that Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius a few decades later started teaching that all these things that were promised by Peter to the Turkish Christians were still in the future! If any of those Christians who had seen, heard, and experienced the Parousia were still around afterwards, why didn't they speak up and set the record straight? The only reasonable excuse for their SILENCE, would be ABSENCE. *Do you catch the power of that?*

(4:12-13) Those saints in Turkey were in the midst of a "fiery ordeal" (a significant persecution) that was already beginning to heat up. Peter tells them to keep on rejoicing, because it was gaining for them a share in God's glory when it was revealed at the Parousia. Peter says that when they saw God's Glory revealed at the Parousia, they would "rejoice with exultation." Question: Did any of those Christians in Turkey live and remain until the Parousia? Did they see that Glory revealed at the Parousia? Did they "rejoice with exultation" when they saw it revealed? Did they receive their share in that Glory when it was revealed? Did they know they saw it and got it? Why don't we hear about them "rejoicing with exultation" afterwards? Peter had told them that these things were about to happen. Their hope was fixed completely upon it, and their expectations were at fever pitch. If they experienced those things that Peter promised here, they should have been high-fiving everyone and dancing in the streets and shouting from the rooftops. Instead, all we find afterwards is SILENCE. No complaints, no brags, no high-fives, no nothing! Just silence. *Do you catch the power of that?*

(4:17) Peter says that at the time he was writing, "it was *time for judgment to begin*" and that it would **begin with the saints** first. This is speaking of the Neronic persecution that was about to descend upon the church. Peter is bracing them for that "fiery trial" that was about to get much worse. This statement helps us date the book before the Neronic persecution.

(5:1-4) Peter says he would be a fellow partaker of the GLORY that is about to be revealed to them. Question: If those saints who remained alive until the Parousia did not SEE that glory revealed, then why does Peter even say that it would be revealed to them, and that they would share in that

glory when it was revealed? Do you see the problem here? Three verses later Peter says that "when the Chief Shepherd appears, those elders in the churches of Turkey would receive the unfading crown of glory." It does not say they would have to wait until their death sometime later to receive those crowns. Nor does it distinguish between those who remained alive until the Parousia versus those who had already died. They all (living and dead) would receive their crowns. Question: Do you see the kind of expectations Peter is giving these saints there in Turkey? Did those saints who remained alive until the Parousia see Christ "appear" as Peter promises here? Did they know that they saw Him appear? Did they receive their crowns? Did they know they received those crowns? Why don't we hear them talking about it later? *Do you catch the power of that?*

(5:13) This verse really helps us date the book of First Peter. Peter sends greetings from the church where he was located at the time of writing, which he says was in "Babylon". We know that he is writing from somewhere inside Palestine, since he said in the opening verses of the book that he was writing to the Diaspora Christians in Turkey, implying that he was not in the Diaspora himself. But how do we know he was writing from Jerusalem specifically? Why does he use the code-word "Babylon" to identify the place from which he was writing? Probably because he was under persecution also, and did not want to reveal his location. The word "Babylon" would not be recognized as Jerusalem by anyone except Christians who had read the book of Revelation. When Peter used this word "Babylon," it accomplished several things. It told his readers in Turkey that he had received the book of Revelation that had been addressed to them originally, and that he was writing from the very harlot city that the book of Revelation was talking about. Since I believe the book of Revelation was written in the Summer of 62, and was in Paul's hands in Rome before the end of 62, them it was probably in the hands of Peter by late 62 as well. So that is the earliest that we could date Peter's first epistle. The latest that it can be dated is the outbreak of the Neronic persecution in late 64. This gives us a two-year span within which to date First Peter.

The presence of Mark there in Jerusalem with Peter is another significant clue that helps us date it. And, the fact that Peter is writing to the very churches who received John's book of Revelation, and among whom Paul visited just before he was arrested the second time, also helps us date it. I tend to think that this was Mark's first visit to Jerusalem after he left Rome and traveled through Turkey and Syria delivering copies of the book of Hebrews. If he left Rome in March of 63, he would have had four months to get to Jerusalem before Peter wrote this epistle in July of 63. That would have been a pretty fast courier trip through Turkey, but it was possible, especially if he traveled by boat from Rome to Turkey, and then traveled the main Roman trade route through Turkey where most of the churches were. Then when he finished traveling through Cappadocia at the eastern side of Turkey, he could have boarded another boat from Antioch down to Caesarea. That would have given him lots of time to spend in Turkey, and still arrive in Jerusalem before the Summer was over. This would still have left him time to travel back to those same churches in Turkey with this letter from Peter, so that he was back in the area of Asia about the same time (or right after) Paul was arrested in the late Summer or early Fall of 63. We noted that Paul in prison at Rome the second time was aware of Mark being in the nearby area around Ephesus when Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy, where he tells Timothy to hurry up and get there before Winter, and to bring Mark with him. Of course, there are several variables in all this which could change the date to early or mid-64. But July of 63 is about the earliest it could have been written, and that is where I tend to date it at this time.

Other Events Just Before Paul's Second Arrest (AD 63)

July 63 – **Saints began leaving Jerusalem and Judea**. The Summer of 63 would have been a good time for the Church to leave Judea to dwell in Pella and other cities outside Palestine. Eusebius said:

> But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a ***revelation***, vouchsafed to approved men there **before the war**, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if **the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men**, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men. (Eusebius *Eccl. Hist*. 3.5:3)

There is a good chance that the "revelation" mentioned by Eusebius was the book of Revelation, especially since Rev. 18:4 says, "*Come out of her my people*." This was written in mid-62 before John was killed in the Neronic persecution in late AD 64. Hebrews 13:13-14 ("go out to him outside the camp") is very similar (written in late 62 or early 63). Both of these statements were written and in circulation before the outbreak of the Neronic persecution (Summer of 64). The saints in Jerusalem would have received copies of both Revelation and Hebrews a year or more before the Neronic persecution broke out (August 64) and could have left the city before they were rounded up and killed by the Romans and their Jewish informants in the Neronic persecution.

Another possible time when some Christians might have left Judea was when the star and the comet (see Apr 65 below) were seen over Jerusalem for a whole year from Passover AD 65 until Passover of AD 66. This could easily have been seen as a warning to get out of the city. Also the signs that they saw at the Passover in AD 66 would have been understood as a warning of coming doom, and almost their last chance to get out easily and safely. However, these things occurred after the Neronic persecution had already killed most of the Christians in Judea and the Diaspora. There probably weren't very many (if any) Christians left in Judea by the time the star, comet, and other signs were seen (AD 65-66).

Eusebius says that they received the revelation and evidently left the city **before the war began**. Josephus says the war began in the Summer of AD 66. So their departure would have occurred long before July 66. Furthermore, the biggest factor in all this (but almost totally overlooked by everyone) is **the Neronic persecution**. If the Christians had heeded the warnings in Revelation and Hebrews (AD 62-63) and left Judea immediately (Summer of 63), they would not have been in Judea when the Neronic persecution broke out (Summer AD 64). Eusebius does not seem to indicate that they remained in Judea until the war broke out. The implication is that they left soon after they received the revelation which commanded them to leave the city (AD 63-64). If any of them waited to leave until the Neronic persecution started, it would have been difficult to escape safely (Summer of 64 until Summer of 66). After the war broke out in the Summer of 66, the Zealots occupied the temple and the Roman armies started approaching Jerusalem. There were not any Christians left in Judea at that time. They had either been killed in the Neronic persecution (Summer and Fall of AD 64), fell away back into Judaism, or were raptured at Pentecost in AD 66. That is why Josephus does not mention any Christians participating in the revolt, even though he does mention Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots. Not even Judaizing Christians were mentioned. Evidently they had fled to Pella and other Gentile cities outside Palestine before the war broke out, and refused to participate in the war.

July 63 – Jesus b. Gamaliel was appointed High Priest by Agrippa II to replace Jesus b. Damnaeus. He ruled for less than two years (AD 63-64). He was the next to last High Priest before the war. He was High Priest at the time the Neronic persecution broke out. He was removed from the High Priesthood right after the construction of Herod's temple was completed (early 65), and the white stone paving project began [Josephus *Antiq*. 20.223 (20.9.7)]. It was this Jesus (son of Gamaliel) who was closely **allied with Ananus II** later in the war (AD 68) when the Idumeans came to crush the moderates who were under the leadership of both Ananus II and Jesus (son of Gamaliel). Both of these former high priests were rounded up and killed by the Idumeans and Zealots [*War* 4.316 (4.5.2)]. We will say more about him when we get to that part of the history in AD 68. In his autobiography (the *Life* 41.204), Josephus states that this Jesus (son of Gamaliel) was a close friend of both himself and his father, Matthias. This fact raises some suspicion that Josephus may have shared the hardline antichristian views of Ananus II, and may have used his trip to Rome to realize some of their shared antichristian goals (such as helping arrange the Neronic persecution). According to Talmudic sources, Jesus b. Gamaliel married **Martha**, a daughter of a priest from the wealthy family of **Boethus**. It was this high priest supposedly who reformed the educational system in Israel at this time, so that every district had its own school and their sons were enrolled at the age of six or seven to begin their education. [VanderKam 483-486]

July 63 – Paul left Philippi and went to Corinth. From Philippi and Macedonia, Paul traveled south to **Corinth**, evidently to receive the funds they had collected for his trip to Spain. While Paul was in Corinth would have been a great time to send Artemas to nearby Crete to replace Titus, so that Titus could travel with Paul onward from there to Nicopolis. This might explain how Titus got dispatched to Dalmatia after Paul was arrested instead of going to Nicopolis. Erastus had been traveling with Paul

and stayed behind in Corinth after Paul went across to **Miletus** (2 Tim 4:10). Trophimus got sick on that boat trip from Corinth to Miletus, and Paul left him there in Miletus to recuperate.

Aug 63 – Paul made his final visit to his churches in Asia. After reaching **Miletus**, but before he had returned to Troas to get his belongings and head toward Nicopolis for the Winter, Paul evidently made one last pass through his **churches in Asia** on his way up to Troas. We do not know if Paul went back through Colossae at this time. Since Colossae is one of the churches of Asia, about whom Paul later said, "all who are in Asia turned away from him," the possibility exists that the church there in Colossae had turned away from him as well.

It was while Paul was there in **Asia**, that "all the churches in Asia turned away from him" (2 Tim 1:15). Why did those churches back away from him? Paul does not tell us. We know it could not have been because of Mark's courier trip through that region earlier, since Paul still had a good relationship with Mark to the very end (2 Tim 4:11), so Mark would not have caused any trouble for Paul. Philemon may have already turned against Paul before Mark passed through there (by refusing to comply with Paul's request to restore Onesimus). Or maybe he turned away from Paul for the same reason the other churches in Asia turned away from him. When Mark delivered the epistle of Hebrews to those churches in Asia, they may have had an adverse reaction to it and turned away from Paul as a result. That was not Mark's fault. We know from Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders a few years earlier (Acts 20:17-28), as well as from the book of Revelation (chs. 2-3), and from the epistles of John, James, Peter and Jude, that false teachers had arisen in Asia and were wreaking havoc among the churches. Heresy and apostasy was rampant. We also know that the persecution was heating up, and the Jewish Zealots were encouraging all Diaspora Jews to support their efforts to revolt (rumors of war). The turning away of that whole group of churches from Paul could also have been related to the general persecution and apostasy that was starting to happen all over the Roman empire, especially in those areas of Turkey that had large Jewish communities like the province of Asia.

Paul's Second Arrest, Imprisonment and Death

Aug 63 – Paul was arrested again and sent to Rome for execution. During Paul's visit to his churches in Asia, he evidently crossed paths with some Jews who wanted to eliminate him. This makes a lot of sense when we remember that it was **"Jews from Asia"** who saw Paul in the temple in Jerusalem and stirred up the crowds to drag Paul out of the temple and beat him up (Acts 21:27-32). Paul mentioned these same **"Jews from Asia"** again in his trial before Felix (Acts 24:18-19; cf. 26:21). Perhaps those same Jews spotted him in Asia on their own home turf and decided to finish the job they started in Jerusalem five years before? We have to wonder if any of them were among the forty who vowed not to eat or drink until they killed Paul (Acts 23:12-21). They would have been pretty hungry and thirsty by this time! Paul had eluded their grasp five years before, but the Asian Jews were determined not to let him get away this time.

It seems likely that **Paul was arrested** during this trip through the Asian churches stretching from Miletus to Troas. He never made it to Troas. He was arrested and evidently condemned, and because he was a Roman citizen, was **sent to Rome** to be executed (beheaded).

Evidently Paul was arrested in the Summer of AD 63, a year BEFORE the Neronic persecution broke out, at a time when it was still safe enough for his fellow workers to travel and work among the churches, as we see described in 2 Tim 4:9-13. This kind of travel and missionary activity would not have been possible after the Neronic persecution broke out. This is why I place Paul's arrest in the Summer of AD 63, instead of the Summer of 64.

Sep 63 – 2 Timothy Written. Evidently Paul was sent to **Rome** swiftly after his arrest there in Asia. He wrote his second epistle to Timothy from Rome, in which he urges Timothy to retrieve his belongings (his cloak, and especially the books and parchments) from Carpus in Troas and bring them to him in Rome before winter (2 Tim 4:13).

Here are some situations and facts that Paul mentioned in Second Timothy, which might help us determine an approximate date for it:

- Paul had been in prison long enough for Onesiphorus to search and find him (1:16-18)
- Winter was not there yet, and evidently was at least a month or more away, giving the courier time to deliver the letter to Timothy, and time for Timothy to travel to Rome from Ephesus (4:21).

- Mark was in the area close to Ephesus at the time Paul was in Rome - Onesiphorus might have told him about that.
- Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark to him in Rome, along with the books and parchments.
- Evidently the Neronic persecution had not started (3:12-13; 4:1), since Timothy was still able to function as an evangelist at Ephesus, and Paul's fellow workers were still able to travel and do mission work (4:10).
- Paul knows he will not get released this time (4:6-7)
- Tychicus was sent to replace Timothy in Ephesus (4:12)
- Travel Fact: Paul had gone to Corinth before going to Miletus (4:20)

He also instructed Timothy to "pick up **Mark** and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service" (2 Tim 4:11). It is interesting that Mark was already back in the region of Turkey at this time. He had probably already delivered the book of Hebrews to Peter in Jerusalem, and was now bringing **Peter's first epistle** back to those churches in Turkey (1 Pet 1:1). We might wonder what kind of "service" Paul wished for Mark to provide for him in Rome. The answer might be found two verses later when Paul urges Timothy to bring the "books and parchments" to Rome also. Since Mark was so adept at scribal and courier services, perhaps Paul was planning to entrust his collection of writings to Mark, for copying and distribution among the churches, or maybe to take them back to Peter in Jerusalem. Peter indicates in his second epistle that he was aware of the contents of "all of Paul's epistles," and eulogized Paul as if he was now dead (2 Pet 3:15-16).

By the time Paul wrote this second epistle to Timothy, he had evidently been in Rome long enough for Onesiphorus to come looking for him and find him, and refresh him, and was "not ashamed of his chains" (2 Tim 1:16). Paul said he was suffering hardship while "imprisoned as a criminal" (2 Tim 2:9). It was probably Onesiphorus who brought this letter back to Timothy, in which he urged Timothy to "make every effort to come to him soon, before Winter" (2 Tim 4:9, 21).

Here in this letter, Paul mentions his fellow workers scattered all over Achaia, Greece, Dalmatia, Macedonia, Asia Minor, and Crete. The freedom of travel for all these fellow workers at the time of writing suggests that this epistle (2 Timothy) was written before the Neronic persecution, after which this kind of travel and missionary work would have been impossibly dangerous and fatal.

Late Date for 2 Timothy (Sept 64)? Some have suggested an alternative date for 2 Timothy which suggests that Paul was not arrested the second time until September of 64 right after the Neronic persecution broke out. This would date his second epistle to Timothy about a year later than what we have suggested above. However, if Paul was not arrested until after the Neronic persecution broke out in late 64, it would mean that Paul spent a year and a half raising funds for his trip to Spain, at a time when he knew "time was very short" (Php. 4:5; Heb. 10:37). It is not likely that he would have delayed his trip to Spain for over a year and a half (after two more Winters).

If Paul had spent that much time in Asia, it would have given him time to write more letters to all his fellow workers scattered all over the Italy-Greece-Macedonia-Crete region. As it is, we have no more letters from him after his first letter to Timothy and the one to Titus, until he writes his second letter to Timothy from prison in Rome. The lack of epistles between 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, and the implied short time span between those two letters, pushes toward the conclusion that Paul must have been arrested in late 63, only six months after his release from Rome the first time. Below are some additional reasons why I cannot subscribe to the late date:

The epistle of 2 Timothy was carried by Tychicus to Timothy who was in Ephesus. There were evidently two different trips of **Tychicus** to Ephesus (i.e., his first trip mentioned in Tit. 3:12). On this second trip, Tychicus was sent to relieve Timothy so that Timothy could go to be with Paul in prison. This was Paul's last epistle before his death, and one of the last few NT books to be written (only Jude and 2 Peter were later than this).

Paul was in prison again, expecting death soon (evidently within a few months, but not until after Winter arrived). If this was in late Summer or early autumn after the Neronic persecution had started there in Rome, Paul would not have lasted until Winter. He would have been killed immediately.

Luke, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia (which sound like Roman names) were with Paul where he was imprisoned (Rome - 2 Tim 1:17). If this was in AD 64 after the Neronic persecution broke out, those fellow-Christians in Rome would have already been killed. They would not have exposed themselves to torture and death by visiting Paul in prison. Therefore, this indicates an imprisonment the year before the Neronic persecution broke out.

Demas "having loved this present age had deserted Paul and gone to Thessalonica." Crescens had gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, and Tychicus to Ephesus (to relieve Timothy). Notice that Titus had gone to Dalmatia. In Paul's previous letter to Titus, he was in Crete, but soon to be relieved so he could join Paul in Nicopolis (which is very close to Dalmatia), where Paul would spend the Winter before going to Spain. Evidently Titus had left Crete and either joined up with Paul somewhere on his travels among the churches before Paul was arrested, or else Paul sent him a message instructing him to go to Dalmatia. We do not know when Paul instructed Titus to go there, but it was definitely before Paul wrote this letter of Second Timothy. Such a mention of Titus being in Dalmatia would have been extremely dangerous if this letter was written after the Neronic persecution broke out. Evidently this epistle was written at a time when it was still relatively safe to mention the location of fellow-Christians. This points to the late Summer or early autumn of AD 63, a year before the Neronic persecution was unleashed.

Timothy was parted from Paul with tears, possibly suggesting a forced separation when Paul was arrested. Onesiphorus, and Aquila & Priscilla were with Timothy in Ephesus. Erastus remained at Corinth, and Trophimus was left sick in Miletus. These latter locations and movements of Paul's various fellow workers provide some significant clues as to when and where this letter was written, and seem to point to late 63. It would have been too dangerous to mention all this if Paul was writing in late 64 after the Neronic persecution had begun.

Since Paul told Timothy to "pick up Mark" and bring him to Paul, it tells us that Mark was evidently in the region of Greece and Turkey, probably delivering the book of 1 Peter to the Diaspora churches. It is also possible that Mark may have visited John on Patmos on his trip through the region of Turkey, assuming that John was still on Patmos [see Ogden on this]. It is possible that John was released from Patmos soon after Paul was released from Rome, and was residing in Ephesus at this time (mid-to-late 63). However, if John was in Ephesus at the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy, we have to wonder why Paul does not greet John in his letter, or at least acknowledge that John was there? This silence would make more sense if John was still in exile on Patmos. This would better fit the earlier date (Sept 63) for Second Timothy.

Timothy was commanded to come to Paul before Winter, and bring the cloak, the books, and the parchments that Paul had left in the care of Carpus in Troas. Paul would not have needed his cloak until he went to Nicopolis for the Winter. It would make perfect sense for him to leave it there in Troas on his way to Colossae, intending to pick it up after his fund-raising trip through the churches of Asia in the Summer just before heading to Nicopolis. Evidently Paul never made it back to Troas to pick up his belongings, or else he was arrested there in Troas and not allowed to take those things with him to prison in Rome. This also points to a late 63 date for 2 Timothy.

Late 63 or Early 64 – Paul's martyrdom. His Roman citizenship did not get him out of trouble this time, but it evidently did buy him some time. In 2 Tim. 4:9 and 4:21, Paul tells Timothy to "come to me soon" and "come before Winter." This implies that Paul was not expecting to be executed immediately, probably not before Winter, but he knew it was inevitable. Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist*. 2.22) says that Paul was killed in Rome on another visit there after he had previously been released. This certainly supports the idea of a second Roman imprisonment and martyrdom. See Ogden for more on that.

It is quite possible that he was executed before Winter or in early Winter. The reason I say that is because Paul had a habit of writing epistles during the Winter time, especially when he was in prison. The fact that we see no more epistles coming from him after 2 Timothy points toward the probability that he was killed no later than early Winter, if not before Winter. If he had stayed long in prison in Rome, he would probably have written more epistles to his fellow workers scattered all over Achaia, Greece, Dalmatia, Macedonia, Asia Minor, and Crete. Plus, the fact that Peter eulogizes Paul in his second epistle (2 Pet 3:15-16), which was written in mid-to-late 64, lends further support to the possibility that Paul was killed in late 63 or very early 64, giving Peter time to hear about it before he wrote his second epistle. It seems that Mark must have gone from Rome to Jerusalem immediately after Paul was killed. Mark probably took Paul's collection of "books and parchments" to Peter.

I have to pause at this point and praise our Glorious Lord Jesus for choosing and using Paul to herald the gospel throughout Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, and nearby regions. He finished the race (Acts 20:24; Heb 12:1) to fully preach the gospel among all the diaspora Jews in those regions (Rom 15:19), and gather together a united harvest of both regrafted Jews and engrafted Gentiles (Rom 11 and Eph 4). Surely he heard his Master say, "Well done!" at the instant he was beheaded in

Rome (Matt 25:21-23; Luke 19:17). He was an "overcomer" in every sense of the term (Rev 21:7). He stretched every fiber of his body to win "the prize of the upward call" at the end of his race (Php 3:14). That award was "far better" (Php 1:23) and "exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we can think or imagine" (Eph 3:20). Paul said that all the horrible sufferings that he went through were "not worthy to be compared with the infinite magnitude of glory that was about to be revealed to all the saints" (living and dead) at the Parousia (Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17). Paul's example of faithful service to the Lord Most High is a huge inspiration for all of us. The fruit of his labor will never cease to be gathered in throughout all generations of the ages. What a legacy he left for us. In the eyes of the world he died in chains as a common criminal (2 Tim 2 Tim 1:16; 2:9), but in the eyes of his Master he was "worthy" to "obtain the salvation and eternal glory, and to live and reign with Him forever" (1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; Col 1:10; 2 Tim 2:10-12). May we all "imitate him as He imitated Christ" so that we (like him) may "inherit the promises" in our heavenly afterlife (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Heb 6:12).

Late 63 or Early 64 – <u>Clement of Rome</u> wrote his first epistle (*First Clement*) to the church at Corinth. Since Clement speaks of the recent death of Paul, but shows no awareness or evidence of the Neronic persecution yet, it appears that his epistle must have been written within that very narrow time-frame soon after the death of Paul and just before the outbreak of the Neronic persecution (Nov 63 – July 64).

What about the fellow worker of Apostle Paul named Clement who is mentioned in Php. 4:3, “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with **Clement** also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.” Is this Clement the same person who according to Roman Catholic tradition was one of their first three popes and who wrote the epistle of *First Clement* in AD 95? If so, we have to wonder why Clement was not raptured. If he was a true Christian and faithful fellow worker of Apostle Paul in AD 63, why was he left behind and still on earth thirty years later?

That is a very perceptive question. Unfortunately, there is nothing but uncertain and questionable late second century speculation about Clement being a pope in Rome. It appears that this tradition may have been either manufactured or twisted by later Roman churchmen in order to support their papal power structure. And it is not just preterists who say this, but many conservative Protestant (futurist) patristic scholars as well. Note what Clement says about Paul's recent death in Rome:

> **<u>1Clem. 5:7</u>** ... [Paul] having taught righteousness to the whole world and having reached the farthest limits of the west. Finally, when he had given his testimony before the rulers, he thus departed from the world and went to the holy place, having become an outstanding example of patient endurance.

In their careful analysis of the epistle of *First Clement* by the committee members of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology in their now-classic but still valuable 1905 book entitled, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, A. J. Carlyle convincingly showed that *First Clement* was written after *Hebrews* (AD 62-63), and *Titus* (AD 63). *First Clement* also reflects awareness of both *First Timothy* (AD 63) and *First Peter* (AD 63), but not *Second Timothy* (AD 63) or *Second Peter* (late 63 or early 64). This would allow for a late 63 or early 64 date of *First Clement*.

Clement seems to be writing from a stable church situation in Rome, which shows no signs yet of having been decimated by the Neronic persecution. He also mentions the recent death of Apostle Paul. The earliest Paul could have been martyred in Rome was the Fall of AD 63. The latest date that Clement could have written this epistle before the Neronic persecution was the early Summer of AD 64. This gives us a range of no more than nine months within which Clement could have written this epistle to the Corinthians (Nov 63 – July 64).

It would not have been safe for Clement to write after the Neronic persecution broke out, nor would there have been a stable church in Rome to write from, nor a church in Corinth to write to. The churches throughout Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Palestine were devastated by the Neronic persecution (AD 64-65), and the few Christians who survived afterwards had to go underground in hiding in order to remain alive until the Parousia (AD 66-70). This again implies that First Clement was written during that very tight time-frame of nine months (Nov 63 – July 64).

Roman Catholic tradition asserts, and wants us to believe, that the Clement mentioned by Paul in Php. 4:3 (AD 63) is the very same Clement who was their third pope and wrote this epistle during his

reign thirty years later (AD 95). But that tradition is suspect, especially since we have no church writings coming from that first generation right after AD 70 which support this tradition.

The name Clement was very common in the first century. So if there actually was a Pope named Clement who sat on the episcopal seat in Rome in AD 95, he could easily have been a different Clement than the one mentioned by Paul in Php. 4:3. If so, that would allow for the possibility that the Clement mentioned by Paul, who most likely wrote this epistle, was either martyred in the Neronic persecution soon after he wrote it, or somehow escaped the persecution and remained alive until the Parousia, at which time he would have been taken to heaven with the rest of the remaining elect saints.

Furthermore, Ignatius and Polycarp (AD 110 and afterwards) seem to quote or allude to *First Clement* as if they considered it as almost having apostolic authority, implying that *First Clement* had been around for several decades before they wrote, and that they considered it as belonging to the generation of the apostles (before AD 70). It seems unlikely that they would have held *First Clement* in such high esteem if it had only been written a decade earlier by one of their contemporaries (AD 95).

Moreover, it is significant that *First Clement* uses the same kind of eschatological *imminency* language in the same *frequency* and *intensity* as the last few books of our NT that were written in those four or five years just before the Jewish war (AD 62-66). For instance, look at its use of the Greek word MELLO (which means "about to be"):

Eschatological uses of the Greek word MELLO ("about to be")

1Clem. 24:1 Let us consider, dear friends, how the Master continually points out to us the ***resurrection about to be*** [Gk *mello*] of which he made the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruit when he raised him from the dead.

1Clem. 28:1 Since, therefore, all things are seen and heard, let us fear him and abandon the abominable lusts that spawn evil works, in order that we may be shielded by his mercy from the ***judgments about to be*** [Gk *mello*].

1Clem. 42:3 Having therefore received their orders and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and full of faith in the word of God, [the apostles] went forth with the firm assurance that the Holy Spirit gives, preaching the good news that ***the kingdom of God was about to come*** [Gk *mello*].

Now compare those above statements in *First Clement* with the New Testament books below that were written during the last five years before the Jewish war:

Luke 21:36 "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are ***about to take place*** [Gk *mello*], and to stand before the Son of Man."

Acts 17:31 because He has fixed a day in which He is ***about to judge*** [Gk *mello*] ***the world*** in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 24:15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there is ***about to be a resurrection*** [Gk *mello*] of both the righteous and the wicked.

Acts 24:25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and ***the judgment about to come*** [Gk *mello*], Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you."

Eph. 1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one ***about to come*** [Gk *mello*].

Col. 2:17 things which are a *mere* shadow of what is ***about to come*** [Gk *mello*]; but the substance belongs to Christ.

2Tim. 4:1 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is ***about to judge*** [Gk *mello*] the living and the dead, and by **His appearing** and **His kingdom**:

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who are ***about to*** [Gk *mello*] ***inherit salvation***?

Heb. 2:5 For He did not subject to angels ***the world about to come*** [Gk *mello*], concerning which we are speaking.

Heb. 6:5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of ***the age about to come*** [Gk *mello*]

Heb. 10:27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH IS ***ABOUT TO CONSUME*** [Gk *mello*] THE ADVERSARIES.
Heb. 13:14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking ***the city which is about to come*** [Gk *mello*].
James 2:12 So speak and so act as those who are ***about to be judged*** [Gk *mello*] by the law of liberty.
1Pet. 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of ***the glory that is about to be revealed*** [Gk *mello*] (compare with Rom 8:18 – "the glory that is *about to be revealed* [Gk *mello*] to us").
Rev. 3:10 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the ***hour of testing***, that *hour* which is ***about to come*** [Gk *mello*] ***upon the whole world***, to test those who dwell on the earth.
Rev. 3:16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am ***about to*** [Gk *mello*] ***spit you out of My mouth***.
Rev. 6:11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who are ***about to be killed*** [Gk *mello*] even as they had been, would be completed also.
Rev. 12:5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child*,* who is ***about to rule*** [Gk *mello*] all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Do you catch the significance of that comparison? Clement spoke of the *Resurrection*, *Judgment*, and arrival of the eternal *Kingdom* of God as being "about to" occur, just like the New Testament writers did. No preterist can be comfortable with that imminency language coming from the pen of a true Christian who lived through the Parousia and experienced all the benefits of it! It would mean either that Clement was totally unaware of the Parousia having occurred, OR that the Parousia did not occur after all.

This means that there is far more involved here than just the problem of Clement missing the rapture. He missed the Parousia, resurrection, and judgment as well – the whole complex of eschatological events! If it is the same Clement that Paul mentioned in Philippians, then ALL PRETERISTS have an even bigger problem than there being no rapture. Think about this: If Clement and any of the other pre-70 saints who witnessed the Parousia and experienced all the things that Jesus and the apostles told them about, were still on earth after the Parousia, they would have known that the Parousia had taken place. They would have been dancing in the streets and shouting about it from the rooftops – *anything but silent about it, or unaware of it*! The fact that not a single post-70 Christian mentions the Parousia as a past event is embarrassing and challenging to all other Preterists who do not hold to the rapture view. But that silence is exactly what we rapture preterists would expect to find after the rapture removed them.

Clement is a case in point. Not only does Clement fail to claim a past Parousia, he explicitly teaches that it was still future and "about to" happen! How can that be? This really discredits those pre-70 saints who supposedly still remained on earth after the Parousia, especially when we see Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius teaching that the Parousia was still future (AD 110). If any of those pre-70 saints were still around after experiencing the Parousia, why didn't they speak up and set the record straight with Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius? Their silence about what they had just experienced at the Parousia totally discredits their Christian faithfulness – OR even worse, it proves that the Parousia really did not occur after all, and that they were silent because they were embarrassed about the failure of Jesus' promise to return in their lifetime. But that would mean that Jesus and the apostles were false prophets when they predicted His return in their lifetime. Obviously, neither of these two scenarios is acceptable to futurists or preterists. Those true Christians could not have been silent about the Parousia afterwards if they were still on earth. Their silence discredits them, or proves that the Parousia did not occur. But the promised Parousia could not fail to occur. That would falsify the faith of ALL Christians, including Futurists. So there is a lot at stake here for ALL Christians, and all preterists, not just the rapture preterists.

And it is the rapture view which rescues both futurists and preterists from the jaws of the liberal and atheistic critics who seek to overthrow our faith by pointing out the supposed failure of Christ to return in that first century generation as He said He would. The rapture explains why there were no true Christians right after AD 70 talking about what they had just seen, heard and experienced at the

Parousia. They were not silent about it because they were *embarrassed* about the non-occurrence of the Parousia, but rather because they were *absent* from the scene!

Thus it seems historically probable that Clement wrote this epistle to the Corinthian church within that very narrow time-frame soon after the death of Paul and just before the outbreak of the Neronic persecution (Nov 63 – July 64).

One of the un-anticipated serendipities of nailing down this early date for *First Clement*, is that it shows that Paul was killed before the Neronic persecution broke out, and that his last epistle (2 Timothy) must have been written soon after Paul was arrested in the late Summer or early Fall of AD 63. Clement spoke of his death in Rome at a time before the Neronic persecution had devastated the church there (i.e., before July 64).

Clement urged the Corinthian church to "send back to us without delay our messengers, *Claudius Ephebus* and *Valerius Bito*, together with ***Fortunatus***, in peace and joy, so that they may report as soon as possible the peace and concord that we have prayed for and desire, so that we too may all the more quickly rejoice over your good order" (1Clem 65:1). Notice that person named ***Fortunatus***. Is this the same person mentioned by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians written from Ephesus in AD 57: "I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and ***Fortunatus*** and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part" (1Cor 16:17). If so, this is further evidence for a pre-70 date of *First Clement*, thus robbing the Roman Catholics of their papal arguments based on the late date, as well as denying the futurists' use of Clement as evidence for the non-occurrence of the Parousia in AD 70.

Thus, using Clement as an argument against the rapture *proves too much*! It would discredit all preterists and falsify the faith of all Christians including futurists, by showing that the Parousia must not have happened since Clement was not aware of it in AD 95. Neither futurists nor preterists can abide by that conclusion. It would mean that Jesus and the Apostles were false prophets, and that our faith is founded on a hoax, just like the liberals, skeptics, atheists, Islamists, Jews, and other critics are claiming. I would instead suggest that Jesus kept His word and came in the first century just like He promised. That is the only explanation which safeguards the integrity of Christ and the Apostles.

Jude and Second Peter Written at Same Time (June 64)

These last two New Testament books, **Jude** and **Second Peter**, seem to have been written just before or at the beginning of the Neronic persecution (AD 64). Some scholars dispute the authorship and canonicity of both these epistles, especially since Jude quotes the book of **Enoch** as being correct and true, and Second Peter seems to give some credence to another apocryphal book, the **Assumption of Moses**. Nevertheless, the internal and external evidence for their apostolic authenticity and authority is strong and compelling. Because of their similar contents, some have suggested that they were written about the same time and sent by the same courier. Here are some factors which support a June 64 date for these two epistles:

- This is the second epistle written to the same diaspora churches as the first letter
- Evidently it was written not long after the first epistle (a year or less)
- Paul had already died by the time this was written (3:15-16)
- Peter had a complete collection of Paul's 14 epistles including 2 Timothy (3:15-16)
- Peter was aware of Paul's book of Hebrews and refers to it here (3:15-16), and shows that he was aware of the fact that those churches had received a copy of Hebrews (evidently through the courier work of Mark, who also brought a copy to Peter).
- The persecution was heating up and Peter was increasingly feeling the heat
- Peter also knew he was getting old, and that the time of his departure must be near (1:14)
- The Neronic persecution had not begun yet - it was still safe enough for letters to be written and carried by couriers to churches in the diaspora, so evidently the churches had not yet been devastated by the great apostasy or the Neronic persecution

This completes our survey of the dates of writing for all 27 of our New Testament books. Since these pre-70 dates for all the NT books has enormous implications for the interpretation and application of these books, it was well worth spending some significant time on it.

Any time we talk about the completion of the NT canon of Scripture, we are dealing with all the issues of inspiration, authorship, relevance, and authority. This writer is a die-hard conservative on canonical matters. Not only do I date all the NT books before AD 70, but I also believe in their inspiration, doctrinal inerrancy, and absolute relevance and authority for us today.

In some of our podcasts, we presented a series of three lessons on **Apostolic Canonization**. That material is not included here, but the PDF lesson outlines are available to anyone who requests them via email attachments.

The concept of an **Apostolic Canon** is probably new for most of us. It is essentially the idea that all the NT writings were written, collected, and certified as authoritative by the apostles before they passed from the earthly scene. The preterist version of that theory goes even further to assert that this process of apostolic canonization was completed BEFORE AD 70. This is not a totally new idea. It has been around since the first century, and several evangelical conservative theologians who are futurists espouse most of it in one form or another. Ernest L. Martin and Norman Geisler are examples. Ernest Martin even uses the term "Apostolic Canonization" to label his view.

So, keep this idea in the back of your mind as we look at these last two books of our NT to be written: **Jude** and **Second Peter**. At the time of writing, I tend to place Second Peter as the last book of our New Testament to be written, while Don Preston tends to place Jude as the last book. But both of us agree that those two books were written about the same time, and could have used the same courier to deliver them to the churches. So, for all intents and purposes, they tie for the honor of being the last book of the NT to be written. We need to look at the authorship issues, and then survey the similarities between the two books.

Everyone has a theory about who wrote the epistles of Jude and Second Peter, and they do not all follow the traditional view that early Christian writers have handed down to us. All of us are reading the same facts, but in some cases coming to different conclusions. Since we preterists are not the only ones who have taken a different approach to the question of authorship and date on these two epistles, there can be no sustainable objection to our theories, as long as we harmonize with the biblical and historical facts.

The evidence and argumentation of those who reject the traditional authorship and date for these two epistles seems contrived and unconvincing. The traditional view seems solid and strong, which is that the epistle of Jude was written by the brother of Jesus about the same time Apostle Peter wrote his second epistle in the late Spring or early Summer of 64.

Some excellent online resources for Jude and 2 Peter

There are some great online resources for these two biblical books. Some of them are listed below:

- *The Pillar New Testament Commentary on Jude and Second Peter*: Written by Gene L. Green, published by Baker Books, 2008.
- Dr. Daniel Wallace's defense of the Petrine authorship and pre-70 date: **http://bible.org/seriespage/second-peter-introduction-argument-and-outline**
- Excellent article showing the similarities between Jude and Second Peter: **http://www.frontline-apologetics.com/2nd_Peter___Jude.html**
- **Preston's Excellent Defense of the Early Date**: Before we get into the actual text of Jude and Second Peter, I have copied below (with written permission) an excellent article written by Don Preston in defense of the early date of Revelation, Jude, and Second Peter, which Don wrote in refutation of Stanley Paher's late date theory. Preston very effectively shows that the book of Revelation, as well as Jude and Second Peter are dealing with the Nicolaitan heresy that was already present in the pre-70 church at least as far back as the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 (AD 49-51). The name of his article is: "The Nicolaitans and the Date of Revelation." This article is also found on his website articles page. **Found here: http://www.eschatology.org/index.php/articles-mainmenu-61/40-revelation/137-the-nicolaitans-and-the-date-of-revelation**

The Nicolaitans and the Date of Revelation

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The condition of the 7 churches of Asia is often posited as evidence for the late date, i.e. 95-98 A.D., of the book of Revelation. Stanley Paher, for instance, in an unpublished paper says "the existence of heretical sects such as the Nicolaitans, the Balaamites and Jezebel's group [Rev. 2:6; 14, 15, 20] is not confirmed by anyone in A.D. 64." He then takes note of Ignatius, early 2nd century, and Irenaeus, later in the 2nd century, both of whom referred to the Nicolaitans. Paher then says "It takes time for heresies to arise from within, for in the first place a church must have had developed a more or less orthodox faith as a standard to compare a departure from it."

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that the Nicolaitans, instead of being evidence for a late date, serve as extremely strong evidence for the early date of the Apocalypse.

The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans. The doctrinal identity of the Nicolaitans helps us place them within a definite framework: the Nicolaitans taught that it was alright to "eat meat sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" Rev. 2:14-15. Why was it wrong to eat meat sacrificed to idols? Why was it wrong to commit fornication? Caution is needed before answering too hastily.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was in direct conflict with the Jerusalem Conference, Acts 15:29, the purpose of which was to enhance Jew and Gentile oneness in Christ! This conference is generally dated around A.D. 51.

It is clear from Paul that the eating of meat sacrificed to idols was in and of itself not wrong, Romans 14; I Corinthians 8; but clearly it was offensive to the Jewish segment of the church. Thus for the sake of unity in the body, the Gentiles were told to abstain in those circumstances in which the eating would bring offense to brethren, I Corinthians 10:23ff. The question of fornication should also be seen in light of its association with the idolatrous background so offensive to the Jewish Christians.

The doctrine of eating of meats sacrificed to idols and fornication was then a matter of grave importance and an issue that arose very early in the life of the first century church. It was an issue of body unity; of Jew and Gentile fellowship. If the Gentiles could be convinced that they had the liberty to continue, because of the abounding grace of Christ, to eat meats and participate in the sensual practices of idolatry then the unity of the body of Christ would be threatened if not sundered. The significance of this issue is revealed when one examines Romans 14, I Corinthians 8, and 10 in great detail and see how much time and energy Paul devoted to it. This was not just an issue of setting forth a doctrine of expediency; it impinged upon "unity of the Faith," Eph. 4:13f; the "the fullness of the Gentiles," Rom. 11:25; and the consummation of the mystery of God in Christ, Ephesians 3:3ff.

2 Peter 2 sheds light on the issue before us. If 2 Peter was addressed to the same audience as 1 Peter then it was addressed to "the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" 1 Peter 1:1. Thus, 2 Peter was written to the very churches addressed in Revelation. 2 Peter is, we believe, to be dated circa, 64-66. [See The New Open Study Bible, Nelson, NASV, introduction to 2 Peter]. What issues did Peter address?

Peter says that the false teachers he is addressing "walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness" 2:2:10; they "have eyes full of adultery" and they were constantly "beguiling unstable souls" vs. 14. Further, Peter says what they were doing was "following the way of Balaam the son of Beor" vs. 15. This is precisely the charge against the Nicolaitans, Rev. 2:14! Compare also the epistle of Jude, vss. 7-12. What we find then is that the very things that were troubling the seven churches of Asia were the issues at stake in books generally dated earlier than the Apocalypse.

Revelation deals with those from within the body teaching false doctrine, 2 Peter and Jude do the same, 2 Peter 2:13. Revelation deals with those teaching sexual immorality, as does 2 Peter and Jude. Revelation calls the false teachers Nicolaitans; but they are also called teachers of the way of Balaam; just as in 2 Peter and Jude. Revelation is addressed to the churches in Asia; 2 Peter is also. With these points of parallelism how can one discount the association? And if the early date of 2 Peter is admitted then the early date for the Apocalypse can hardly be denied.

Further, when one considers how early the issue of eating meats and fornication, [cf. I Cor. 6], became an issue, circa A.D. 51, Acts 15; Romans 14, circa A.D. 57; I Corinthians 8, 10, circa A.D. 56, it can hardly be argued that these doctrines were not major issues as early as the 60s. On the contrary, it is seen in

the light of Acts, Romans, and Corinthians that the issues of Revelation 2-3 were issues of long standing trouble in the early church. Revelation does not stand isolated therefore from the religious milieu of the rest of the New Testament. Instead, we have the testimony of Acts, Romans, Corinthians, 2 Peter and Jude that the very issues addressed by Jesus in Revelation were part of a widespread endemic problem within the early church.

Instead of the doctrinal problems of the Asian churches being distinctive from the issues in the other epistles we find that they are the identical issues. Instead of Revelation demanding a later period of time allowing for a time of evolutionary doctrinal development and then apostasy we find the standard established very early, Acts 15 and within 5-6 years problems arising in direct relationship to that standard. Instead of the doctrinal aberrations of the Nicolaitans being indicative of the late date for Revelation therefore we find that it provides evidence that the possibility for the early date for Revelation certainly cannot be ignored; the probability becomes apparent; the certainty becomes increasingly likely.

There is a great deal more that could be written in regard to the Nicolaitan controversy as it related to the Jew-Gentile one-ness and the attempts to destroy or prevent that unity from becoming reality. I believe, however, that this article has refuted the basic argument of Paher and others that attempt to remove the historical and doctrinal situation of Revelation from the context of the rest of the New Testament. [End of Preston's article]

Comments on Jude and Second Peter

Jude

1:1 - Authorship - Jude the brother of James (not son of James) and half-brother of Jesus
1:1 - "kept for Jesus Christ" – clear time statement and expectation statement
1:3 - The Faith, once for all delivered to the saints
1:4-16 - The Nicolaitans (see Preston's great article copied above)
1:13 - Black darkness reserved forever (Eternal Conscious Punishment - not Annihilation)
1:14-15 - the quote of Enoch is labeled as a true prophecy by Jude
1:18 - In the Last Time there will be mockers (those Nicolaitans were the ones), therefore they were in the Last Time.
1:21 - "waiting anxiously" for something that they would not even recognize when it occurred? What does Jude say they would get? "mercy ... to eternal life"? I thought they were already Christians and had mercy and grace and eternal life! What is this additional mercy and eternal life that they would get at the Parousia? Did they get it? Did they know they got it? Did they experience it any cognitive way? Or were they still "waiting anxiously" for it after AD 70, not realizing that it had already arrived? It seems more likely that they did receive that merciful rescue out of the tribulation and their heavenly home when Christ returned. *Do you catch the power of that?*
1:24 - Notice the expectation that Jude gives to those first century saints: "**keep you from stumbling** and to **make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy**." Jude prays that God would keep them from falling away into the error of the Nicolaitans, so that they would remain faithful at the time of the Parousia, so that they would be allowed to stand blameless, unashamed, and with great joy in the presence of His glory at the Parousia. He is clearly talking about those who would remain alive at the Parousia, praying that they would remain faithful to the very end, so that they would stand unashamed and joyful in His glorious presence at the Parousia. They were not expecting to miss that Parousia. They were promised here that they would stand blameless in His glorious presence. They would see His glory and know that He had come, and would receive the mercy and eternal life. They would experience great joy when they saw and experienced these things. *Do you catch the power of that?*

2 Peter

2:17 - Peter mentions the "black darkness" being reserved for those same Nicolaitans that Jude mentioned. (Eternal Conscious Punishment - Not Annihilation)
3:12 - "**looking for** and **hastening** the coming of the Day of God" – why bother looking for it and hastening it if they were not going to see it and recognize it when it came, or experience it in any cognitive way? This language by Peter presupposes that they would "**see**" this event for which they were "**looking** and **hastening**"! Why does Peter tell them to "look for it" and "hasten it" if they were not going to **see it** and experience it in any way? What would be the point of looking for it? And if they did

see it and experience it, why didn't they talk about it later, and let the next generation of Christians know that the Parousia had happened? Evidently they were no longer around to tell anyone (i.e., raptured). *Do you catch the power of that?*

3:13 - Peter again says that "**we are looking for** new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" – certainly heaven is such a place where true righteousness dwells. There is nothing to forbid that application here, especially in view of the preceding and following verses describing what they would see, hear, and experience at the Parousia. Peter says he was looking for it. Did he know what he was looking for? Did he share that with the first century saints so that they would also know what to look for? Did they see it? Did they know it happened? Why didn't they speak up afterwards and set the record straight when Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius began saying that the Parousia was still future? *Do you catch the power of that?*

3:14 - Notice the words "**to be found by Him** in peace, spotless and blameless" – This is referring to their spiritual condition at the time of the Parousia. What condition would Christ "**find them in**" when He returned? Would they be "**found** in peace, spotless and blameless"? **Would they know** that they were **found** in that condition? Would they see Christ return and **find them** in that condition? Or would the Parousia come and go without them even being aware of it? And if they were aware of it, and were found in peace, spotless and blameless, why don't we hear them talking about that experience later if they were still alive on planet earth? The implication is that they were no longer around. They weren't killed at the Parousia, so they must have been changed into their immortal bodies at the Parousia, and caught up to be with Christ in the UNSEEN realm forever afterwards. *Does the reader see the implications of all these expectation statements?*

Here is a Challenge for Us All: Read back through the whole New Testament asking (and answering) these two questions:

1. *What do Jesus and the Apostles TELL the pre-70 saints that they could **expect** to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia.*
2. *What do the Apostles and other pre-70 saints SAY that THEY were **expecting** to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia?*

Jude Was Written (June 64)

June 64 – The epistle of **Jude** (half brother of Jesus and full brother of James) was evidently not written until after his brother James was killed (i.e., sometime after April in AD 62 and before the outbreak of the war in August of AD 66). Jude probably would not have written this epistle if James was still alive. This allows for the possibility that Jude may have been functioning in the role that his brother James had formerly occupied. Since there are several similarities between Jude and 2 Peter, it seems probable that these two books were written about the same time, with **Jude** being written first, and then **Peter** showing that he approved of it by using some of the same information that Jude had used from Enoch about the fallen angels, thus putting his stamp of Apostolic canonical approval ("binding and loosing") upon this epistle that had been written by someone who was not one of the twelve apostles. Having two books saying the same thing about the Nicolaitans (Balaamites) was important – at the mouth of two or more witnesses every fact is determined. This delivered a powerful legal judgment against those false teachers. John had already condemned them in the book of Revelation, which was written almost two years earlier. Now Jude condemns them, and Peter backs it up with his "binding and loosing" authority as an Apostle.

The Body of Moses (Jude 9) – Individual or Collective?

Jude 9 (notes) – Some preterists (who take the Collective Body view of the resurrection) have suggested that *"the body of Moses"* mentioned here is speaking of the collective body of Israelites in the wilderness, and not the literal individual physical body of Moses. How can we determine whether or not that is the case? Notice what Jude says here:

> *But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"* [Jude 9 NAS95]

Here are a couple of comments about this from the ***Bible Knowledge Commentary*** **(BKC)** and the **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown (JFB)** commentary:

> "The archangel Michael was sent to bury Moses' body, but according to Jewish tradition (in the pseudepigraphal book, *The Assumption of Moses*), the devil argued with the angel about the body, apparently claiming the right to dispose of it. But Michael, though powerful and authoritative, did not dare dispute with Satan, so he left the matter in God's hands, saying, The Lord rebuke you!" [***BKC***]
>
> Josephus [*Antiq.* 4.8] states that God hid Moses' body, lest, if it had been exposed to view, it would have been made into an idol. Jude ... either adopts it from the apocryphal "Assumption of Moses" (as ORIGEN thinks, *Concerning Principalities* 3.2), or else from the ancient tradition on which that work was founded. [***JFB***]

So, here is what we can conclude about the body of Moses mentioned here in Jude:

1. Jude was alluding to the story in the apocryphal book, *The Assumption of Moses*.
2. *The Assumption of Moses* was talking about the literal individual physical body of Moses, and not a collective body concept.
3. Therefore, it seems certain that Jude had the literal individual physical body of Moses in mind when he wrote. Therefore, the collective body idea does not apply to this particular text.

June 64 – **2 Peter** was probably written about the same time as Jude, and therefore was one of the last two books of our New Testament written. Thus Peter put his capstone on the canonical collection. That appears to be one of the reasons he was given the keys of the Kingdom. He was inspired and had the authority from Christ to "bind and loose," i.e., the authority to decide what was or was not canonical. Second Peter was definitely written after Paul's letter to the Hebrews (March of 63), since he alludes to it here in 2 Pet 3. Peter was aware of what Paul said about the "new heavens and earth" in the book of Hebrews (compare Heb. 12:18-29 and 2 Pet. 3:13-16). And it seems that Peter's mention of Paul here in 2 Pet 3 is in **memoriam** (i.e., after Paul had been executed in Rome in late 63 or early 64). I take it as a **post-mortem** reference to Paul for several reasons:

1. Peter refers to Paul as "our beloved brother Paul" in typical **eulogistic** style.
2. Peter said in **past tense** (as if Paul's writing process was now finished) that Paul "wrote to you." This also implies that Paul wrote a general epistle to all those same churches in the five provinces of Turkey that Peter was writing to. The book of Hebrews is the only one of Paul's epistles that did that.
3. Then Peter refers to "**all his letters**" as if there was now a finished collection of all of Paul's epistles (2 Pet 3:15-16). There is no way Peter could have "all of his letters" unless Paul was dead and was therefore no longer writing.

Whether we take it as a post-mortem reference to Paul or not, it was at least a clear recognition of Paul's inspiration and canonical authority alongside Peter, since Peter puts all of Paul's epistles on a par with "the rest of the Scriptures." So I believe 2 Peter was written after Paul's letter to the Hebrews which mentions the New Heavens and Earth in Hebrews 12 (AD 63), and either just before or right after the Neronic persecution began in July of AD 64 (which prefigured the soon-coming conflagration in Jerusalem predicted in 2 Pet. 3). Since there are several similarities between Jude and 2 Peter, it seems certain that these two books were written about the same time. Second Peter was evidently written after Peter was arrested and was awaiting execution there in Jerusalem.

From the reference to "Babylon" in 1 Pet. 5:13, we know that Peter wrote his first epistle from Jerusalem. See the notes below about Peter's martyrdom in Jerusalem (instead of Rome).

Since Peter says his "departure is at hand" the same way Paul did, it could mean that Peter had read 2 Timothy and was familiar with Paul's statement there, and used a similar expression about his own imminent death. If Timothy and Mark followed Paul's instructions in 2 Timothy and went to Rome immediately after Paul's arrest in Summer or Fall of AD 63, then Mark could have traveled back to Judea after visiting Paul in Rome during the Fall or Winter of 63-64. Mark would have carried copies of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus with him back to Peter in Jerusalem. Peter then could have written 2 Peter

in the Spring of AD 64 and sent Mark back to the Diaspora to deliver that second letter in the Summer of AD 64. This would mean that 2 Peter was most likely written and sent by courier sometime between the Spring and Summer of 64, but it could have been written after the Neronic persecution broke out in the late Summer of 64. In that case, Peter would have been arrested in Jerusalem in the late Summer or Fall of 64, and executed soon afterwards.

After March of AD 65 the Jews would no longer have had the full cooperation of the Romans to kill Christians because Nero killed his "religious" wife (Jewish proselyte) in March of AD 65, and this ended the cozy relationship that the Jews had with Nero through his wife Poppaea. Based on this reasoning, I would place the writing of 2 Peter somewhere in the range (Spring 64 to Winter 65 AD), while the news of the Neronic persecution was still fresh and the Jews were still in a good position to use the Romans to kill the Christians who were in Judea.

Late 64 – Peter's Martyrdom. Peter knew that his own martyrdom was drawing near when he wrote his Second Epistle. He was probably arrested and killed in Jerusalem just before or during the Neronic persecution. News of the Neronic persecution may not have reached Palestine until after John and Paul had already been martyred. The Jews in Judea probably used Nero's persecution in Rome as an easy way to get the Romans to arrest all the Christians in Judea and kill them. Since Peter was not a Roman citizen, he would not have had the right to a trial in Rome like Paul did. So it does not seem likely that Peter would have been taken to Rome. Peter would not have supported the Zealot cause in Judea, so all the Jews, including the Zealots, would have had plenty of reasons to kill Peter, and when the Neronic persecution broke out, they would have had an easy way to get the Romans to do their execution work for them.

Peter also knew his days were numbered because he was now growing old and many of his generation had already passed on. Jesus had told him that when he grew old (John 21:18) he would stretch out his hands and someone else would gird him and take him where he did not wish to go. John interpreted this to signify the kind of death that Peter would suffer (i.e., probably a crucifixion). The crucifixion idea leans in the direction of death at the hands of Romans. Even though this would allow for the possibility that Peter could have been taken to Rome to die at the hands of Nero, it is still much more likely that he was killed right there in Jerusalem by crucifixion just like Jesus was.

There are some scholars who claim that Peter was indeed killed and buried in Jerusalem. Search the Internet for "The Discovery of Peter's Tomb in Jerusalem" written by F. Paul Peterson in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1960. The reason why the Catholics claim Rome as the place of his death is because they think his mention of being in "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13) was referring to Rome (instead of Jerusalem). They assume Peter was still in "Babylon" when he wrote his second epistle.

Some Christians could have left Judea as early as the Fall of 62 right after the book of Revelation was written and put into circulation. We noted previously that Eusebius claimed the Church received a "revelation" commanding them to leave Jerusalem and Judea, and that they did leave "before the war." If the "revelation" that they received was the book of Revelation, it means that they began leaving as early as the Summer of 62, two years before the Neronic persecution broke out (Summer of 64). If they waited until the Neronic persecution to leave Judea, it would have been very difficult to escape arrest and death. Evidently Peter remained in Jerusalem until the Neronic persecution, and was killed there.

Shortly after the Great Fire in Rome (July 64), the Roman people began to circulate the rumor that Nero was responsible for setting those fires. Evidently someone came to Nero's rescue by suggesting that the blame be shifted to the Christians [Tacitus, *Annals* XV.44]. We have to ask who would have had "motive and opportunity" to do that? Certainly the Jews in Rome would be prime suspects. And the case against them is made even more compelling by the fact that there are early historians who actually made that connection. Nero got off the hook, and the Jews temporarily rid themselves of the Christian threat to their dominance. Whether it was the Jews who put this idea into Nero's head or not, it is clear that the Jews used Nero's hostility against Christians as an excuse for exterminating Christians in Judea and throughout the Roman empire. So the Neronic persecution was the time (late 64 or early 65) when Peter was killed, soon after Paul and John had also been killed.

After Nero killed his Jewish wife (Poppaea) in March of AD 65, the Jews would have had difficulty getting the Romans to do any more favors for them (such as arresting Christians and killing them), so it is more likely that Peter was killed before March of 65, which also means that 2 Peter was probably written before that (late 64 or very early 65).

New Testament Canon Completed in AD 64

Second Peter appears to be the last book of our New Testament to be written. Peter used his canonical "binding and loosing" authority to put the finishing touches (the capstone) on the New Testament canon. Here is the list of the books in the order in which we have suggested that they were written and circulated (with their dates):

Matthew (AD 31-38)
Mark (AD 38-44)
Galatians (AD 51-52)
1 Thessalonians (AD 51-52)
2 Thessalonians (AD 51-52)
1 Corinthians (AD 57)
2 Corinthians (AD 57)
Romans (AD 58)
Luke (AD 61)
Acts (AD 61-62)
John (AD 60-62)
James (AD 61-62)
1, 2, 3 John (AD 61-62)
Revelation (AD 62)
Ephesians (AD 62-63)
Colossians (AD 62-63)
Philemon (AD 62-63)
Philippians (AD 62-63)
Hebrews (AD 62-63)
Titus (May 63)
1 Timothy (June 63)
1 Peter (July 63)
2 Timothy (Sept 63)
Jude (June 64)
2 Peter (June 64)

The five year period we have been looking at (AD 60-64) was extremely critical to the development of our New Testament canon. By my count, 19 of our 27 NT books were written in those five short years (in chronological order of writing): Luke, Acts, John, Jas, 1Jn, 2Jn, 3Jn, Rev, Eph, Col, Phm, Php, Heb, Tit, 1Tim, 1Pet, 2Tim, Jude, 2Pet. What an explosion of literary activity in such a short time right before the Neronic persecution brought an end to all evangelistic, ecclesiastical, and literary activity! During those five short years the apostles were scrambling desperately to prepare the church for the *Great Tribulation* and the *Great Apostasy* which they knew was about to be unleashed upon them. The combined forces of Nero and the Jewish establishment vented all its fury against the Church in its attempt to utterly wipe it off the face of the earth. In some sense, the Neronic persecution appears to have been **the War** (Armageddon?) that the book of Revelation talks about. But the unbelieving Jews, who played the harlot with Rome and helped Nero arrange the persecution, ended up being hung on their own gallows that they had prepared for the Church (like Haman in the book of *Esther*). Since Haman was an Amalekite, it might explain what *Barnabas* meant when he compared the persecuting Jews to the Amalekites (*Barn* 12:9).

Since we have now finished dealing with the date of writing for all 27 of the New Testament books, we will now look at the formation of the New Testament canon. This will give us a lot of insight into how our New Testament was written, copied, collected together, and ultimately certified by Peter and the other Apostles as inspired Scripture. When the apostles authorized (certified) all these books for circulation among all the churches, that was an exercise of their apostolic "binding and loosing" (canonical) authority. That is why we call it an Apostolic Canonization.

Great Commission Finished (Late 64)

June 64 – **Gospel had been "preached in the whole world**...**to all the nations**" before the End arrived (Matt. 24:14). And it seems that the End Jesus had in mind was the Neronic persecution. Jesus had told the disciples that the End would not arrive and the Kingdom would not come UNTIL they had preached the gospel throughout the whole Roman world. That Great Commission was finished. From AD 58 onwards, Paul began to indicate in his epistles that the gospel had indeed been preached throughout the Diaspora, wherever there were Jewish communities. Notice what he said about this in his prison epistle to the Colossians (in AD 63):

Col. 1:5-6 ...the gospel...**in all the world** [Gk. *panti to kosmo*]...is constantly bearing fruit and increasing...
Col. 1:23 ...the gospel...was proclaimed in **all creation under heaven**...

1 Tim. 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, **proclaimed among the nations** [Gk. *ekeruxthe en ethnesin*], **believed on in the world** [Gk. *episteuthe en kosmo*], taken up in glory.

Tommy Ice and other futurists point out that **all nations** in the **whole world** were not evangelized by AD 70. They reason that since the gospel was not preached in America and Australia before AD 70, the End of the Age could not have arrived then. But were America and Australia really included in this prophecy of Jesus?

In Col. 1:6, 23 quoted above, Paul says the gospel had already been proclaimed in "all creation under heaven" (Gk. *pase ktisei hupo ouranon*), and was already bearing fruit in "all the world" (Gk. *panti to kosmo*). And in Rom. 1:8 Paul states that news about the faith of the Roman Christians had spread throughout "the whole world" [Gk. *holo to kosmo*]. Did folks in Australia or America hear about the faith of the Roman Christians?

When we look at the usage of these two phrases ("the whole world" and "all the nations") in the New Testament, we can easily see that they are not talking about every ethnic group on the whole planet, but rather the Roman world and the Diaspora of the first century.

"**the whole world**" – Lk. 2:1; Acts 11:28; 17:31; 19:27; 24:5; Rom. 10:18; and Rev. 3:10. cf. Josephus *Antiq.* 15:387 (15.11.1) where he records the speech of Herod the Great who said, "the Romans...are the rulers of the whole world."

"**all the nations**" – Lk. 21:24; 24:47; Acts 2:5; 21:21; Rom. 1:5; 16:26; and 2 Tim. 4:17

Notice that the phrase "*the whole world*" (Lk. 2:1) is translated "whole Roman empire" in the *Amplified Bible* and as "whole empire" in the *HCSB*. Futurist translators here admit that this phrase does not mean all individuals on the whole planet, nor even every continent on the planet. The famine predicted in Acts 11:28 actually occurred during the reign of Claudius, and it was not a global famine, but mainly in Palestine and Judea. In Acts 17:31 it is stated that Jesus was "about to judge" (Gk. *mello*) the world (Gk. *oikoumenen*). If futurists insist on taking "world" globally, then they need to show a universal judgment of all men on the whole planet that occurred shortly after Paul spoke these words. In Acts 19:27 the Ephesian silversmiths claimed that *the whole world* worshipped the goddess Artemis. But she was only a Mideastern and Mediterranean idol. Paul's accusers (in Acts 24:5) claimed that he stirred up dissension among *all Jews throughout the world*, but we only know of his travels in Palestine, Turkey, Greece, and Italy (the **Roman world** or **Diaspora**). Paul claims (Rom. 10:18) that the gospel had already gone out to the ends of the world by that time (AD 58). In the letter to the church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:10) Jesus reveals that he would keep them safe from the hour of testing (the Neronic persecution) which was about to come (Gk. *mello*) upon the whole world (in AD 64-65). The Neronic persecution did not reach all the way to America and Australia, but it did affect the Roman world and the Diaspora.

The phrase "*all the nations*" as used in the texts listed above is also very revealing. In Luke's parallel account of the Synoptic Apocalypse (Lk. 21:24) Jesus said the Jews "would be led captive into all the nations." Did the Romans take them to Australia and America? Or is it referring only to those nations within the Roman sphere of influence? On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5) it says there were Jews residing in Jerusalem from "**every nation under heaven**." Then it lists those regions (Acts 2:9-11) from which they originated: the Mideast (Persia) and all the nations on the Mediterranean Rim. Acts 2:9-11 does not mention Australia or America. Paul claims (Rom. 16:26) that the gospel "had been made known to all the nations" by the time he wrote Romans (AD 58). Was he including Australia and America in that list of "all the nations"? In his last epistle (2 Tim. 4:17) written just before he died in the Neronic persecution (AD 64-65), Paul stated that in his trial before the Roman court that "all the nations" had heard the gospel. Were there representatives from America and Australia in Nero's courtroom?

The fourth century church historian Eusebius also affirmed that the gospel spread throughout "the whole world" in the first century, and there is not the slightest implication that America or Australia was included. [Euseb. *Hist. Eccl*. 2.3.1 and 3.8.11]

Josephus in his lamentation of the destruction of Jerusalem refers to **the Diaspora** where the Jewish nation had been scattered as being **"all the habitable earth"** – "...yet hath not its great antiquity, nor its vast riches, nor the **diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth** [Gk. *holes*

tes oikoumenes], nor the greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed..." [*War* 6:442 (6.10.1)]

As an additional note, it is interesting that even in the **Talmud** [Bab. Talm. Mas. *Sanhedrin* 97a], one of the rabbis asserted that the Messiah would not come until the whole world was converted to the faith of the heretics (Christians):

> It has been taught, R. Nehemiah said: in the generation of Messiah's coming impudence will increase, esteem be perverted, the vine yield its fruit, yet shall wine be dear, and the Kingdom will be converted to heresy with none to rebuke them. This supports R. Isaac, who said: **The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics**. [Bab. Talm. Mas. *Sanhedrin* 97a]

We have seen that the two phrases ("the whole world" and "all the nations") as used throughout the NT are clearly referring to **the Roman world** and **the Diaspora** of the first century. Therefore, despite the shallow objections of the futurists, it seems conclusive that Matthew 24:14 (and the Great Commission in Matt. 28:19) was already fulfilled by the time Paul wrote his prison epistles in AD 63.

So, it should not be surprising that the completion of the canon of NT Scripture occurred about the same time. We have seen that all the NT writings were finished by the time Peter died in 64. That was less than a year after Paul had written his last epistle to Timothy in late 63.

June 64 – The Literary Efforts of the Apostles Ceased. They stopped writing, not because they wanted to, but because they were killed in the Neronic persecution and were no longer around. The fact that their writings came to an abrupt end before 70, and we hear no more from them after that, tells us that they must have died. If any of them had remained alive on earth beyond AD 70, they would have continued to pump out more epistles to the churches.

Apostle John is a case in point. If he was still alive on earth after AD 70, he could easily have written more inspired Scripture. And it would have been necessary for him to do that, in view of the statements of Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius saying that the Parousia was still future. It would be criminal negligence for an inspired apostle to ignore that false teaching and let it go uncorrected. He should have spoken up and let everyone know that his book of Revelation had already been fulfilled.

Church historians like John A. T. Robinson find it extremely peculiar that missionary activity and the writing of epistles intensified in those last few years just before the Jewish revolt. And the time statements in those last few books were also intensified, both in quantity and imminency. Thirty-five years before this, Jesus told his disciples that all these things would occur in that generation sometime, before all of them died. But in the last dozen epistles that were written, the imminency language is extremely intense ("coming of the Lord is at hand" end of all things is at hand" "it is the last hour" "the world is passing away"). All their intense missionary activity and epistle-writing came to a screeching halt in AD 64 with the deaths of Peter, John, and Paul in the Neronic persecution. We would think that some of Paul's traveling companions (Timothy, Titus, Gaius, Aristarchus, Tychicus, et al) would have survived the Neronic persecution and continued working with the churches, even if they had to go undercover after the Neronic persecution broke out. But we hear no more from any of them after Peter penned his final epistle (2 Peter), where he says that his departure (death) was at hand. *He sealed the New Testament canon with his blood.*

Paul mentions about eighty different individuals who worked with him in his missionary activities. After AD 64 we do not hear from a single one of them. A profound silence rolls in upon the church like a London fog. Robinson likens it to a noisy train going into a tunnel and coming out the other side radically changed. We are at a loss to know what happened to the train inside the tunnel to change it so radically. That is a good illustration of what happened in AD 64.

The Neronic persecution took out all the visible leaders of the church and most of the visible members as well. The few who did survive the Neronic purge were forced underground until they were raptured. They were literally running for their lives. They could not take time to write any more letters, nor were there any Christian couriers who were willing to risk their lives to carry the letters to churches that were in hiding or no longer in existence.

All missionary and literary activity ceased. The Great Commission had been accomplished. The canon of New Testament Scripture was closed. There were no more inspired writers left alive on earth to write any more books. From here onwards in our chronology you will notice that there is no more mention of any visible activities of the apostles and the Christians before AD 70. The Christians have

left the stage, and the spotlight shifted over to the Jews and their war with Rome.

Peter said in his first epistle that the saints would be judged and rewarded first (1 Pet. 4:17), before the wicked were judged and destroyed. That seems to be exactly what happened. The Neronic persecution was when judgment began with the household of God. The Christians were judged and rewarded first, then the wrath was poured out full strength upon their persecutors.

In Jesus' Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24-43), the wheat is gathered (raptured) into the barn first (AD 66), and then the tares were burned (AD 70). The Neronic persecution eliminated the majority of remaining Christians. The few remaining went into hiding until the rapture. There were not a lot of Christians left on earth by the time of the Parousia. Jesus had already predicted this very scenario when he said, "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8), and "Unless those days had been cut short, no flesh would have been saved" (Matt 24:22). So, it wasn't a large number of saints left on earth to be raptured, and they were in hiding, running for their lives. If the world around them noticed their absence, they would only have thought that the Christians had either fled in the night to escape persecution, or they were rounded up by the Jewish and Roman authorities and taken away to be killed.

One of the arguments against the authenticity and canonicity of books like Jude, Second Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation, is that those books did not enjoy a wide circulation like the gospels and Paul's earlier epistles. The reason for this limited copying and distribution was its nearness to the outbreak of the Neronic persecution, not because of any lack of inspiration or acceptance by the churches. Those NT books that were written two or more years before the persecution had plenty of time to be copied and circulated widely. But those written less than a year before the persecution, did not have enough time to be copied and distributed widely. Consequently, there weren't many copies of them floating around after AD 70, and this lack of widespread circulation made them appear spurious. The liberal and skeptic argument runs something like this: If a book was in wide circulation, it was only because it had been widely accepted by all the churches. Conversely, if a book was not widely circulated, it was because it had not been "accepted" by most of the churches, and was therefore considered non-canonical.

However, that theory of canonization grossly overlooks the time factor involved with the Neronic persecution. It is easy to see how good apostolically-authorized books could get lost in the shuffle after the Neronic persecution broke out, simply because it was no longer safe for Christian scribes and couriers to do their work of copying and distributing the books. Writing, copying, and courier activities ceased when the last apostles, their scribes, and couriers were killed in the Neronic persecution. Any Christians who remained alive at that time (AD 64), went into hiding until the Parousia (AD 66).

Another factor that may have limited the wide circulation of some of these last few NT books, especially in Asia Minor and Turkey, was the fact that "all who are in Asia turned away" (apostatized) in AD 63 before the Neronic persecution broke out. That great apostasy of those churches in Asia (and elsewhere) would have broken the scribal and courier links in the distribution chain. This easily explains why some of those last few books of the NT did not get widely distributed, and were consequently questioned by the second century church. But by the time of the Neronic persecution, all 27 books of our New Testament had been finished and put into circulation.

Fire in Rome and the Neronic Persecution (July 64)

Jul 19, 64 – Great Fire in Rome. The fire started on July 19th (AD 64), and burned for six days, and then broke out again and burned for three more days. Out of the fourteen sections of the city, only four remained intact after the fire (see Tacitus *Annals* 15:44). Most of the precious antiquities of Rome, including the decorated houses of its great leaders, its most sacred objects and temples, trophies, and antiques, all vanished in the flames. While Rome was burning, Nero supposedly watched from Mecena's Tower and was delighted with the beauty of the flames. He sang of the destruction of Troy in his lyre-player's costume. **Philip Schaff** well describes the fire and its damage to the city:

> The cause of the conflagration is involved in mystery. Public rumor traced it to Nero, who wished to enjoy the lurid spectacle of burning Troy, and to gratify his ambition to rebuild Rome on a more magnificent scale, and to call it Neropolis. According to Tacitus *Annals* 15:39, and Suetonius 100:38, "Robbers and ruffians were seen to thrust blazing brands into the buildings, and, when seized, they affirmed that they acted under higher orders. The elder Pliny, Xiphilinus, and the

author of the tragedy, Octavia, likewise charge Nero with incendiarism" . . . When the fire broke out [Nero] was on the seashore at Antium, his birthplace; he returned when the devouring element reached his own palace, and made extraordinary efforts to stay and then to repair the disaster by a reconstruction which continued till after his death, not forgetting to replace his partially destroyed temporary residence (*domus transitoria*) by "the golden house" (*domus aurea*), as a standing wonder of architectural magnificence and extravagance. [Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1; Accordance electronic ed., 8 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910. n.p.]

Aug 64 – Nero began the Persecution of Christians. It seems almost certain that none of the NT books were written after the Neronic persecution began. It would not have been safe for the scribes, the couriers, or the intended recipients. This implies that all of the NT canon was complete by the time Rome was burned, probably including 2 Timothy, Jude, and 2 Peter. After those three books were put into circulation, there does not appear to be any further writings from any of the inspired writers. All missionary work ceases, all literary activities (scribes, couriers) cease, and what is left of the church goes into hiding until the Parousia.

The Neronic persecution was a very dark time for the Church, and even though it was short-lived (only two years – AD 64-66), it was extremely intense and killed the majority of the remaining Christians. And it was the "eve of destruction" for the Jews. They wanted to wipe out the Church, but instead got wiped out by the Romans.

We do not know the exact date when the persecution began, nor precisely when Paul and Peter were killed. But we do know that rumors arose shortly after the fire (and even during the fire) that Nero was to blame for ordering the fires to be ignited. Nero would have wasted no time clearing himself of that charge, and shifting the blame to someone else. So, the persecution must have started soon after the fire, most likely as early as August, while the disaster was still weighing heavily upon the Roman populace, and they were looking for someone to vent their wrath upon.

It is well worth the effort to examine the accounts of Tacitus, Suetonius (*Nero* 16:2), and Juvenal, along with Tertullian's lengthy critique of the persecution (*Ad Nationes*). First, we will read the full account from **Tacitus** [AD 56-117]:

> But not all the relief of men, nor the bounties of the emperor, nor the propitiation of the gods, could relieve him [Nero] from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration. Therefore, in order to suppress the rumor, Nero **falsely charged** with the guilt, and **punished with the most intense tortures**, those persons who, hated for their crimes, were commonly called Christians. The founder of that name, Christus, had been put to death by the procurator of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judaea, the source of this evil, but also through the city [of Rome], whither all things vile and shameful flow from all quarters, and are encouraged. Accordingly, first, those only were arrested who confessed. *[Philip Schaff's Note: Confessed what? Probably the Christian religion, which was already regarded as a sort of crime. If they confessed to be guilty of incendiarism, they must have been either weak neophytes who could not stand the pain of the torture, or hired scoundrels.]* Next, on their information, a **vast multitude** (multitudo ingens), were convicted, not so much of the crime of incendiarism as of hatred of the human race. **And in their deaths they were made the subjects of sport; for they were wrapped in the hides of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set on fire, and when day declined, were burned to serve for nocturnal lights**. Nero had offered his own gardens [on the Vatican] for this spectacle, and also exhibited a **chariot race on the occasion**, now mingling in the crowd in the dress of a charioteer, now actually holding the reins. Whence a **feeling of compassion arose towards the sufferers**, though justly held to be odious, **because they seemed not to be cut off for the public good, but as victims to the ferocity of one man**." [Tacitus *Annals* 15:44 [5:283, 285], written at the end of his life, c. AD 117].

Schaff elaborated further on what Tacitus said:

> Under this wanton charge of incendiarism, backed by the equally groundless charge of misanthropy and unnatural vice, there began a carnival of blood such as even heathen Rome never saw before or since. It was the answer of the powers of hell to the mighty preaching of the two chief apostles, which had shaken heathenism to its [foundations]. A "**vast multitude**" of Christians [were] put to

death in the most shocking manner. Some were crucified, probably in mockery of the punishment of Christ, some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the voracity of mad dogs in the arena. The satanic tragedy reached its climax at night in the imperial gardens on the slope of the Vatican (which embraced, it is supposed, the present site of the place and church of St. Peter): Christian men and women, covered with pitch or oil or resin, and nailed to posts of pine, were lighted and burned as torches for the amusement of the mob; while Nero, in fantastical dress, figured in a horse race, and displayed his art as charioteer. Burning alive was the ordinary punishment of incendiaries; but only the cruel ingenuity of this imperial monster, under the inspiration of the devil, could invent such a horrible system of illumination.

The Neronic persecution was the "**great tribulation**" that Christ and the Apostles had warned the saints to prepare for. So many dear saints were brutally tortured and killed in unspeakable horror. That darkest of all nights for Christians may have seemed like the End, but the Gates of Hades did not prevail. Jesus cut short that great tribulation and rescued his elect ones out of it.

The Church rose up out of the ashes of that great persecution to become the mightiest cultural, religious and spiritual force on the planet. The Neronic persecution was merely the "eve of destruction" for the Jews. Their ruthless butchery of Christians only provoked the King of Kings to **cut short** the persecution, **rescue** His elect saints, and **avenge** His martyrs by pouring out His **full cup of wrath** upon their persecutors.

The Roman historian **Suetonius** [AD 69-122] mentions the persecution in only one sentence: *"Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition."* Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "Nero" Book 6, Ch. 16 (2:107) – Found at this link: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Nero*.html

Juvenal (AD 55-130?), a late first and early second century Roman satirical poet, who was probably an eye-witness of the horror (acc. to Philip Schaff), alluded to it with mingled feelings of contempt and pity for the suffering Christians: *"Darest thou speak of Tigellinus' guilt [one of Nero's favorites]? Thou too shalt shine like those we saw, stand at the stake with throat transfixed, smoking and burning."* (Juvenal *Satires* 1:155)

Tertullian (d. about 220, Christian writer) alluded to the Neronic persecution in his defense of Christianity and the Gospel:

> This name of ours took its rise in the reign of Augustus; under Tiberius it was taught with all clearness and publicity; under Nero it was ruthlessly condemned, and you may weigh its worth and character even from the person of its persecutor. If that prince was a pious man, then the Christians are impious; if he was just, if he was pure, then the Christians are unjust and impure; if he was not a public enemy, we are enemies of our country. What sort of men we are, our persecutor himself shows, since he of course punished what produced hostility to himself. . . . Although every other institution which existed under Nero has been destroyed, yet this of ours has firmly remained . . . [Tertullian *Ad Nationes* Bk. 1, Ch. 7]

> Search your records, then you shall find that Nero was the first that used Caesar's sword against this sect, which at that time greatly increased at Rome. However, we glory in the author of our condemnation, for he who understands, knows that Nero could only condemn that which is very good. [Tertullian *Apology* Bk. 1, Ch. 5 (3:22)]

Philip Schaff tells us that **Sulpicius Severus** (c. 363-425) in his *Chronicle* (2:28-29) "gives a pretty full account [of the horrors suffered in Rome], but mostly [copied] from Tacitus. Both he and **Orosius** (c. 375-418, *History Against the Pagans* 7:7) [were the first to] clearly assert that *Nero extended the persecution to the provinces*." Both of these were Christian writers, and Orosius worked with both Augustine and Jerome.

Schaff sums up the matter well when he says: "It is not unlikely that in this (as in all previous persecutions, and often afterwards) the fanatical Jews, enraged by the rapid progress of Christianity, and anxious to avert suspicion from themselves, stirred up the people against the hated Galileans, and that the heathen Romans fell with double fury on these supposed half Jews, disowned by their own strange brethren" (as both Ewald and Renan have suggested). [Schaff, *Hist. of Christian Church*]

In order to deflect accusations away from himself, Nero accused the Christians. The Jews in Rome

(using their good relationship with Nero's "religious" wife Poppaea, *Antiq*. 20.195) may have helped Nero concoct this accusation. They had both "motive" and "opportunity." Eusebius quotes Justin Martyr as saying that the Jews throughout the Roman empire had more than once circulated such false slanders against the Christians in order to prejudice the Roman authorities against them. [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist*. 4.18] He quotes Melito also about such Jewish "informers." [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist*. 4.26]

Another tidbit of history that supports these suspicions is the fact that the Jewish quarter of the city (region 14), which lay across the Tiber river to the southwest, escaped the damaging fires. Therefore, some Romans suspected the Jews of lighting the fires, since their quarter of the city was virtually untouched. However, since Nero's "religious" wife was somewhat friendly toward the Jewish people, Nero may have spared their part of the city from the torch. This raises the question about whether the Jews may have known about the burning of the city in advance, or simply were spared because of their friendly relations with Nero, and their trans-Tiber location. However, since many of the Christians were Jewish, and lived in the Jewish quarter of the city, it would have been easy for the Jews to divert the suspicion against them over to the Christians.

Schaff notes that "**Dion Cassius** (born circa A.D. 155), in his *History of Rome* (preserved in fragments and in the abridgment of the monk Xiphilinus), from the arrival of Aeneas to A.D. 229, mentions the conflagration of Rome, but ignores the persecutions of the Christians." [Philip Schaff, "Apostolic Christianity," *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1; Accordance electronic ed. 8 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), n.p.]

Warmington is puzzled by the ***strange silence*** of ancient historians surrounding the persecution of the Christians by Nero. He says:

> No convincing explanation of the silence of later generations about a connexion between the measures against the Christians and the fire of Rome exists. Tacitus' work was more or less forgotten; as for the Christian tradition, it may be supposed that almost the entire Christian community at Rome was destroyed and that later arrivals and converts in the city had no reason to cherish the memory of those who had suffered, particularly as no issue of religious faith was directly involved. (Warmington, *Nero: Reality and Legend* 127)

Warmington is obviously not a preterist, nor even a conservative Christian, so it is no surprise that he finds it hard to explain the silence surrounding the great fire in Rome and the subsequent persecution of Christians. He is certainly not aware of the possibility that the **Parousia** and **Rapture** may have occurred, and that this may have something to do with the **absence** and **silence** of the Christians afterwards.

AD 64 – Correspondence between Paul and Seneca. This caught my eye while doing online research about the fire in Rome and the persecution of Christians afterwards. It is an article on the Internet defending the authenticity of the letter exchanges between Apostle Paul and Seneca the Younger (the advisor to Nero). The letter from Seneca dated AD 64 mentions the Fire in Rome. The writer of that article, Dr. Barbara Thiering, made some very interesting arguments for the authenticity of these letters between Paul and Seneca, which must be objectively evaluated, since almost all modern scholars consider these letters to be spurious. However, even if spurious, they might still contain tidbits of truth which were preserved by the third or fourth century writer who created them. Their supposed third century origin alone makes them valuable for study. It at least tells us what the third century Christians believed about these things. Here are a few excerpts from Thiering's article:

> The belief that Christianity came to Rome only through the lowest social classes, not working its way up until the time of Constantine, has been responsible for overlooking one of the most vital historical documents of all. The correspondence between Paul and the famous Stoic philosopher Seneca was preserved in the early church, accepted as genuine by the scholarly church fathers Jerome and Augustine, but categorically rejected as spurious by modern critics. Ernst Bickel believed that it originated in the 3rd century: "This correspondence presents a mythical expression of the historical process of fusion which came about in Italy...of Christianity on the one hand and, on the other, the ancient culture of the rhetoricians."
>
> Seneca, in Jerome's words, was "the teacher of Nero and the most influential man of that time." The letters, some of them with exact dates expressed in terms of the consuls actually in office, sound natural, without any defensiveness such as would be expected if they were forgeries. They

are written in just the way an open-minded intellectual of the period would write if he had taken an interest in a new religion from a foreign source being presented as another philosophy. If, as the pesher of Acts indicates, Paul was a member of the court of Agrippa II , then he was of sufficient social standing to meet and converse with the eminent philosopher. The later letters show that Seneca was protecting Paul and the Christians from the venom of Nero in the period leading up to the great fire of 64 AD. This accords with the fact that Seneca, who had been tutor of the young Nero, had lost the favour of the capricious emperor, who ordered him to commit suicide, an order he had to obey with the courage of a Stoic in 65 AD. The letters begin at the outset of Nero's reign at the end of 54 AD.

...[The last letter of Seneca to Paul is dated] AD 64, in which Seneca begins: "Can you possibly think that I am not distressed and grieved that capital punishment is still visited upon you innocent persons? As also that all the people are convinced of your cruelty and criminal malignity, believing that all evil in the city is owing to you". [Barbara Thiering, "The Correspondence between Paul and Seneca," June 2005] Found here on 12/16/2014 – http://www.peshertechnique.infinitesoulutions.com/The_Other_Gospels/Paul_and_Seneca.html

The *Early Christian Writings* website has an introductory article about it at the following weblink: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/paulseneca.html

Full online text of the correspondence can be found at: http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2220

The print version of it can be found in *The Apocryphal New Testament* by M. R. James, translator and editor. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press. First edition 1924. Reprinted numerous times.

Aug 64 – Was Josephus involved in the plot to kill Christians? Josephus was still in Rome at the time of the great fire (July 64) and during the persecution of Christians afterwards, yet he does not say a word about either of those two events. Later Christian writers have suggested that the Jews in Rome convinced Nero to blame the fire on the Christians, to get himself off the hook. Josephus was in Rome at that very time, and had connections with Nero through Poppaea. Surely he would have known about these accusations that his fellow Jews were bringing before Nero. It was probably not politically or economically expedient for him to mention these events, since it would have been an incrimination against Nero, and an embarrassment to Vespasian and Titus who were in league with Nero.

In Rome after the war was over, Josephus collaborated with Vespasian, Titus, Agrippa II, and Bernice to write his *Wars* and *Antiquities*. Many of the things that Josephus says (or does not say) may be connected with the preferences and sensitivities of his Roman patrons or friendship with Agrippa and other Jewish loyalists. Another connection that should also be kept in mind, is that the post-70 rabbinical school at **Yavneh** may have exerted some influence on the contents of Josephus' writings. They were bitterly anti-Christian, and may have played some role in the Neronic persecution right before the war. We will have more to say about that when we get to the war itself and its aftermath.

It is profoundly peculiar that **Josephus** does not mention any of this, even though he was in Rome at the time of the great fire and the persecution afterwards. He did allude to some of the crimes of Nero, but nothing specific, and certainly nothing related to the fire and the persecution (*Antiq*. 20.8.2-3). Furthermore, Josephus had cordial relations with Nero and Poppaea at that very time through a mutual acquaintance named **Aliturius,** *"an actor of plays and much beloved by Nero, but a Jew by birth"* (Josephus *Life* 1:16). Josephus met Aliturius in Puteoli right after he had recovered from the shipwreck. Evidently Aliturius had performed in Nero's palace. Josephus said that it was *"through his interest that [Josephus] became known to Poppaea, Caesar's wife, and took care, as soon as possible, to entreat her to procure that the priests might be set at liberty; and when, besides this favor, I had obtained many presents from Poppaea, I returned home again"* (Josephus *Life* 1:16). Josephus does not say what other favors Poppaea granted him, nor why Poppaea was so generous. What had Josephus and Aliturius done for Nero and Poppaea that excited such lavish gratuities? Could it be that the Jews in Rome used this connection between Aliturius and Poppaea to suggest a way for Nero to get out of the blame for the fire, by blaming it on the Christians? It is certainly possible. Nero and Poppaea would have been extremely grateful for such a suggestion. It was a "win-win" for both Nero and the Jews. Again, there is motive and opportunity, the two key ingredients for suspicion.

At the time Josephus wrote the *Wars* (in AD 70-78) there were not very many Christians back in existence yet. The **Neronic persecution**, the **great apostasy**, and the **rapture** had removed them. It

took a while for the gospel seed that had been planted in the hearts of countless thousands to sprout and grow. Since Christians were so **scarce after AD 70**, Josephus may have felt no need to mention them, thinking that they had been dealt such a **crushing blow** in the Neronic persecution that they would **never be a significant factor** in the Roman world again.

That would have been the worst case of underestimation in history! After the war, those who had heard the gospel before the war, began accepting Christ and **restarted the church** again, but without any trained leadership to guide them. The Christians were certainly not a threat to the Jews at that point. Josephus does not mention any Christians being around until he wrote the *Antiquities* in AD 93, saying that "the tribe of Christians, so named from him, **are not extinct at this day"** [*Antiq*. 18:64 (18.3.3)]. It is hard to tell from this statement what was his opinion of Christians. Is he merely stating the situation as it was, or is he lamenting the fact that they were not extinct, as he and his fellow Jews in Rome might have hoped? This statement, written over twenty years after AD 70, shows that Christianity had finally reappeared on the radar screen after the Neronic persecution and rapture. There were enough of them around for Josephus to notice that they were not extinct after all, much to the chagrin of his Jewish comrades.

I can think of several different possible motives why Josephus did not mention the fire in Rome in July 64, nor the persecution of Christians afterwards. Perhaps Josephus thought that the Neronic persecution eliminated the vast majority of Christians, so there were not enough left around to be worth mentioning, and that the Church was effectively destroyed, never to be a significant factor again. He may also have wanted to avoid mentioning the fire in Rome and its associated Neronic persecution of Christians, since he may have been involved with the group of Roman Jews who influenced Nero to blame the fire on the Christians. Maybe he did not want to give Christians any publicity so that his Gentile readers would not hear about Christ and be converted. Perhaps he did not want to say anything about the affairs in Rome that might reflect adversely upon Rome or the emperors (Nero and Vespasian) from whom he and the Jews had obtained so many favors. Maybe his friends in Rome (Agrippa and Bernice) advised him to leave out any mention of the fire and the accusation against Christians for neutrality sake. Who knows? Maybe all of the above are true, plus a whole lot more reasons why he did not mention it. But it is certainly peculiar that he does not say anything about the fire in Rome or the persecution of Christians afterwards. Very intriguing. Historians are puzzled by his silence about the Fire and the persecution afterwards.

Late 64 – How widespread was the Neronic persecution? Of course, futurist expositors try to downplay the significance of the Neronic persecution and greatly exaggerate the persecution under Domitian. But Orazio Marucchi, a Roman Catholic scholar, mentions several Roman and Italian sources who indicate that the Neronic persecution was not just confined to Rome or Italy, but rather:

> "...extended throughout the length and breadth of the Empire. The burning of Rome was but a pretext, for the Christians were to be considered as enemies of the human race." [Orazio Marucchi, *Manual of Christian Archeology*, p. 29]

Philip Schaff, in his classic eight-volume *History of the Christian Church*, cites both ancient and modern historians who believed the Neronic persecution was much broader in scope than just Rome and Italy:

> The heathen historians, if we are to judge from their silence, seem to confine the persecution to the city of Rome, but later Christian writers extend it to the provinces: e.g., **Orosius** (about 400), Hist., VII. 7 . . . So also **Sulpicius Severus**, Chron. II. 28-29. . . . **Ewald** (VI. 627, and in his Commentary on the Apocalypse) and **Renan** (p. 183) very decidedly affirm the extension of the persecution beyond Rome. . . . **C. L. Roth** (Werke des Tacitus, VI. 117) and **Wieseler** (Christenverfolgungen der Cäsaren, p. 11) assume that Nero condemned and prohibited Christianity as dangerous to the state. **Kiessling** and **De Rossi** have found in an inscription at Pompeii traces of a bloody persecution [120 miles south of Rome] . . .
>
> The example set by the emperor in the capital could hardly be without influence in the provinces, and would justify the outbreak of popular hatred. If the Apocalypse was written under Nero, or shortly after his death, **John's exile to Patmos** must be connected with this persecution. It mentions **imprisonments in Smyrna**, the martyrdom of **Antipas in Pergamus**, and speaks of the

murder of prophets and saints and **all that have been slain on the earth** (Rev 2:9, 10, 13; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24). . . . Peter, in his first Epistle . . . warns the Christians in Asia Minor of a **fiery trial** which is to try them, and of sufferings already endured or to be endured, not for any crime, but for the name of "Christians" (1 Pet. 2:12, 19-20; 3:14-18; 4:12-19).

Christianity, which had just reached the age of its founder, **seemed annihilated . .** . With Peter and Paul, the first generation of Christians was buried. Darkness must have overshadowed the trembling disciples, and a despondency seized them almost as deep as on the evening of the crucifixion, thirty-four years before. But the morning of the **resurrection was not far distant**. . . [and] "the gardens and circus of Nero on the Vatican, which were polluted with the blood of the first Christians, have been rendered still more famous by the **triumph . . . of the persecuted religion**" [Gibbon, ch. 16].

None of the leading apostles remained to record the horrible massacre . . . This mysterious book [the book of Revelation] . . . was undoubtedly **intended for the church of that age** as well as for future ages, and must have been sufficiently adapted to the actual condition and surroundings of its first readers to **give them substantial aid and comfort in their fiery trials**. Owing to the nearness of events alluded to, they must have **understood it even better**, for practical purposes, than readers of later generations. John looks, indeed, forward to the final consummation, but he sees the end in the beginning. He takes his standpoint on the historic foundation of the old Roman empire in which he lived, as the visions of the prophets of Israel took their departure from the kingdom of David or the age of the Babylonian captivity. He describes **the heathen Rome of his day** as "the beast that ascended out of the abyss," as "a beast coming out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads" (or kings, emperors), as "the great harlot that sitteth among many waters," as a "woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns," as "Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth" [Rev. 11:7; 13:1; 17:1, 3, 5; cf. Daniel's description of the fourth beast in Dan. 7:7ff]. The seer must have in view the **Neronian persecution**, the most cruel that ever occurred, when he calls the woman seated on seven hills, "**drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus**" (Rev. 17:6), and prophesied her downfall as a matter of rejoicing for the "saints and apostles and prophets" (Rev. 18:2. cf. Rev. 6:9-11). [Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1; Accordance electronic ed. 8 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), n.p.]

Notice what Schaff said above about the Harlot City being *drunk with the blood of the saints* (Rev. 17:6). He saw this bloodshed of the Harlot City as a reference to the Neronic persecution. In Rev. 7:9-17, there is another clear reference to the Neronic persecution when it talks about the "great multitude" of martyrs who were killed in the "great tribulation." Plus, there were warnings to the churches in Asia (and "all the churches" in the empire) that "troublous times were near" (cf. Rev. 2:10f; 3:10; and the idea of rewarding the "overcomers" is repeated throughout the book).

If the Neronic persecution only affected the city of Rome, and there was no rapture, then we would have seen most of that first generation of Christians still alive and active throughout the war and afterward for the next three or four decades after AD 70. The Gentile Christians outside Palestine especially, should have continued doing mission work, building churches, and traveling around the empire like Paul and the other apostles had done. But we see none of that kind of activity after the Neronic persecution and the beginning of the revolt in AD 66. All missionary activity and writing of inspired books ceased, and the churches where the apostles labored had vanished. *There is nothing from any of them to explain the sudden and mass disappearance of the Gentile Christians outside of Rome and Palestine, except for the Neronian Persecution and the Rapture.* This alone, if we had nothing else, strongly implies that the Neronic persecution was empire-wide, and encompassed both Jewish and Gentile Christians. The shroud of silence that descended upon the church after the Neronic persecution tells us that the vast majority of Christians were killed at that time.

But the point that even most of us preterists have missed, is that the Neronic persecution, and its associated great apostasy, *did not eliminate ALL of the true Christians*. There were still some true "elect" Christians who "lived and remained" until the Parousia. And Christ did not kill them at the Parousia, so unless they were raptured out of there, they should have still been around on earth after the Parousia to explain what had just happened in AD 70.

The book of Acts and Paul's epistles mention over 80 different people who worked with Paul and the other apostles in their missionary work (Timothy, Titus, Gaius, Aristarchus, Tychicus, Silas, Luke, Epaphras, Hermas, Clement, Mark, *et al*). It is simply not likely that every one of them were killed in the Neronic persecution, or fell away from the faith in the great apostasy. Some of them would have escaped to safe places where they would have "lived and remained" until the Parousia.

Jesus made it clear in at least two texts that there would still be Christians "living and remaining" at His return (Matt. 16:27-28; 24:21-31). Apostle Paul taught the same (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:15-17), as did Apostle John in the book of Revelation (chs. 2-3, esp. 2:25f) and his gospel (John 21:22).

So, the Neronic persecution did not kill all the Christians. Not all of them died then, nor did all of them fall away in the great apostasy. Jesus said that at His Parousia His remaining "elect ones" (faithful Christians) would be gathered into His heavenly presence by the angels. Some of those "elect" saints lived and remained until the Parousia.

However, for some reason, there is NO evidence of them still being around on earth AFTER the Parousia. But, there should be LOTS of evidence coming from them, unless they were raptured out of there. Since Jesus called them "elect" saints, implying that they were faithful Christians, they would have KNOWN that the book of Revelation had been fulfilled, and that the Parousia had occurred. They would have TAUGHT the next generation the truth about it, so that we would not find second century church writers like Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius totally confused about it, and teaching that the Parousia was still future.

If any of those first generation "elect ones" were still around after the Parousia, why didn't they speak up and tell the next generation of Christians what they had seen, heard, and experienced at the Parousia? Why didn't they set the record straight when Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius started teaching that the Parousia was still future? It would certainly be unfaithfulness on their part, if not criminal negligence, to remain silent about what they had seen and heard and experienced at the Parousia, especially in view of the next generation of Christians saying that the Parousia was still future.

Their silence becomes even more disturbing and incriminating when we look at the kind of things those first generation Christians were promised to see, hear and experience at the Parousia. They were definitely NOT expecting that event to come and go without them being aware of it, nor without experiencing the benefits of it. They were told that they would "see" Him at His return, and glorify Him on that day, and marvel at Him in the presence of all who had believed (2 Thess 1:6-10). They were commanded NOT to shrink away from Him at His coming, but rather to draw near to Him and be gathered into His presence (1 Jn 2:28). They were told that they would be rescued from the wrath that was coming upon the unbelievers. They were promised relief from the persecution and reward in His presence. Did they experience all those things that Jesus and the Apostles had promised them? Why were they so silent afterwards? Why did they let Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius teach that the Parousia was still future? Do you see the problem with that? *Their silence is deafening, and their absence is obvious!* How can that be explained without a rapture?

Other Events During the Neronic Persecution (Late 64)

Late 64 – Agrippa II assembled the Sanhedrin and ordered them to pass a law allowing the Levites to wear linen garments (like the priests), so that they could sing alongside the priests in the temple. [*Antiq*. 20.10.6]

Late 64 – Construction of the outer buildings of the Temple was now finished [*Antiq*. 20.219 (20.9.7)]. Over eighteen thousand workers were now unemployed. The Jews wanted to put them back to work on rebuilding the eastern cloisters, but Agrippa II denied that petition, and instead authorized their paving the streets of Jerusalem with white stone [*Antiq*. 20.222 (20.9.7)]. This was another one of those events which stimulated many disgruntled unemployed workers to join the bands of robbers (and Sicarii) to plunder the Judean countryside. Some of them also became sympathetic to the Zealot cause at this time. What is also interesting here, is that this is also the time when the new spiritual heavenly temple was pretty much complete and ready for the saints to dwell in.

Late 64 – Matthias b. Theophilus (grandson of Ananus b. Seth) was appointed as High Priest by Agrippa II, in place of Jesus b. Gamaliel. His appointment supposedly occurred at about the same time the Temple was finished and the streets were paved with white stone [*Antiq*. 20.222 (20.9.7)]. Matthias

ruled for at least two years (AD 64-66), and probably as long as four years (AD 64-68). It seems that he continued as High Priest after the outbreak of the war in AD 66, and was not replaced until later in the midst of the war when the Zealots selected their own High Priest by casting lots (**Phannias b. Samuel**). According to Derenbourg (*Essai* 249), cited in VanderKam (p. 487n), Matthias was the last of the High Priests to be installed according to the normal procedure – appointed by Agrippa II and then ratified by the Sanhedrin [VanderKam 487]. VanderKam says it is quite possible that Matthias was the grandson of Ananus I, the high priest who condemned Jesus and sent him to Pilate for crucifixion. However, Josephus does not verify this one way or the other.

There is also some reason to suspect that the Neronic persecution, which began in the Summer of 64, might have been the impetus for a change in both the procuratorship and the high priesthood. Florus may have been sent to Judea in the late Summer of 64 for the express purpose of enforcing the Neronic persecution, while Agrippa II at the same time may have appointed a new high priest (Matthias b. Theophilus) who would be willing and able to carry out the dirty work of Nero against the Christians. This would have been late Summer or early Fall of AD 64.

A number of scholars suggest that the father of Matthias, named **Theophilus**, was the son of Ananus I, thus making Matthias the grandson of Ananus I (the eighth and last member of the Ananus family to be high priest).

Josephus for some strange reason does not say much about Matthias, raising some speculations about his identity and possible connections with Josephus. He was high priest at the time the war broke out in AD 66, and was supposedly appointed about the same time that Gessius Florus became the Procurator (in place of Albinus), which is probably Late 64 just as the Neronic persecution was getting underway.

VanderKam thinks he might be mentioned by Josephus in the *Wars* [6.114 (6.2.2)], but the only thing that text says about him is that he had four sons who escaped to the Romans during the siege (AD 70). Matthias was the High Priest at the time of the Neronic persecution, which Josephus also does not say anything about, even though he was in Rome at the time the fire broke out, and afterwards when the Neronic persecution was raging.

The name Matthias was very common in the family of Josephus (i.e., his father and brother and several ancestors had that name). According to the autobiography of Josephus (*Life* 5), the name of Josephus's father was Matthias, who was born in the tenth year of Archelaus (AD 6). He would have been 58 years old at the time this Matthias b. Theophilus became high priest. Some have wondered if this Matthias might have been the father of Josephus, but Josephus does not provide any clear support for that connection. If there was a family connection here, it would explain why Josephus was so complimentary to Ananus II.

However, the most interesting thing about this **Matthias** is the fact that he became high priest during the time when Christians were being rounded up and slaughtered by Nero and his Jewish helpers (late 64 or early 65), and while the Zealots and Sicarii were trying to stir up interest in a revolt. The Jews would have taken full advantage of this Neronic persecution to rid themselves of all Christians, not only in Rome, but in Judea especially, as well as all the major Jewish centers scattered throughout the Roman world. It is very strange that Josephus says nothing about the fire or the persecution afterwards, even though he was in Rome at that very time. There does not appear to be any further information about Matthias in the Talmudic sources, which were produced by the rabbis at Yavneh, who might also have had motives to cover up any connections between Matthias and the Neronic persecution.

Josephus said that some High Priest with this name was a son of Boethus and that he was slaughtered along with three of his sons by Simon son of Giora [*War* 5.527 (5.13.1) and 6.114 (6.2.2)]. It is not certain, however, that it was the same Matthias. There has been some speculation that this Matthias may have been related to Josephus in some way, since his father and brother both had that same name. However, Josephus mentions his father in the same context as being held in prison in isolation [*War* 5.533 (5.13.1)]. So, the identity and tenure of Matthias still remains somewhat mysterious and hard to nail down.

Late 64 – Albinus emptied the prisons. When **Albinus** heard that **Florus** was coming to replace him, he emptied the prisons. Josephus says that this filled the country with robbers [*Antiq* 20.215 (20.9.5), cf. Antiq 20.160]. Albinus was probably still the Roman governor (procurator) of Judea at the time the Neronic persecution began (late Summer or early Fall of 64). However, Gessius Florus evidently came

into Palestine about the same time the Neronic persecution broke out (according to VanderKam). So it seems that the change in procuratorship from Albinus to Florus may have occurred about the same time the Neronic persecution broke out in Judea. It may have begun under Albinus, but his successor Florus definitely finished that wicked task.

Fall 64 – Gessius Florus became procurator (replacing Albinus) and "filled Judea with abundance of miseries." We know he ruled for more than a year, since Josephus said the war broke out in his second year of office, which was also the twelfth year of Nero's reign in AD 66 [*Antiq*. 20:257 (20.11.1)]. We also know he had already been governor for a significant time before Passover 65 when a delegation of Jews there at the feast denounced Florus to Cestius Gallus. Florus had been in Judea long enough to make himself hated by the Jews. That implies at least six months, and would place the beginning of his governorship no later than the Fall of 64, while the Neronic persecution was raging. This means that Florus received his governorship from Nero in Rome about the same time the Neronic persecution had begun in the late Summer of 64, and must have taken his boat trip to Judea before the seas became unsafe for travel in the early Fall of 64.

This could mean that Nero sent Florus to Judea to oversee the persecution against the Christians. Florus' wife Cleopatra was a close friend of Nero's wife Poppaea, by whose influence he obtained the procuratorship. Since it is probable that Poppaea was involved in the scheme to blame the Christians for the fire in Rome, Cleopatra would have known about it, and her agreement with it may have influenced Nero to select Florus as the one to oversee the persecution in Judea. It is not surprising, therefore, to see Josephus describe Florus like that: "Gessius did his unjust actions to the harm of the nation after a pompous manner; and **as though he had been sent as an executioner to punish condemned malefactors**, he omitted no sort of rapine, or of vexation" [*War* 2:277 (2.14.2)]. Perhaps he had learned how to do that by watching his friend Nero persecute the Christians in Rome.

Florus most likely would have let the Jews do some of that unpleasant work for him. The Jewish leadership may have bribed him to look the other way while they took advantage of Nero's hostility against Christians. Florus most likely would have allowed the Jews to find the Christians and bring them to him for execution. They did such arrests at night when it was easy to catch the Christians by surprise and take them away. That would have been an extremely dangerous time for Christians living anywhere in Palestine, or even among the Diaspora Jewish communities. This forced them to flee from Judea and go into hiding.

This is why the statements of Eusebius make a lot of sense, where he says that the Christians were warned by a revelation to get out of Jerusalem "before the war" (AD 62-64). They were indeed warned, not only "before the war", but even before the Neronic persecution. The book of Revelation contains such a warning ("come out of her my people"), which was written in late 62 soon after John was exiled to Patmos, almost two years before the Neronic persecution broke out. This explains how both Paul and Peter seemed to be familiar with the book of Revelation when they wrote their books of Hebrews and 1 Peter in AD 62-63. Paul also tells the Hebrew Christians to leave the city of Jerusalem, as well as the Jewish neighborhoods of Diaspora cities (Heb. 13:13-14, written in AD 62-63). Hanging around with non-Christian Jews was no longer safe for Christians.

It is extremely interesting to see Josephus give us so much background information about the appointment of Florus in Rome like this. The reason he was able to do that, is because Josephus was in Rome at the very time Florus was appointed, and was among the group of Roman Jews who had connections through Poppaea to Nero, just like Florus and his wife Cleopatra did. This is another of those parts of Josephus which prove that he was in Rome at this time, otherwise he would not have known these details. Evidently he remained in Rome another year or so until just before the war broke out in Judea. He probably heard how things were becoming unstable in Judea and wanted to go home to see if he could help the Jewish leadership regain control of the situation.

Florus remained procurator until the war began in AD 66. He became partners with the robbers, sharing in their booty in exchange for their immunity from punishment. As a result, many more malcontents joined with the robbers in plundering the Judean countryside. Even though Josephus does not identify who were the victims of this robbery and plundering, it certainly must have included any Christians who were still living there in Judea and Palestine.

Troubles began to increase dramatically at this time (late-64 to mid-66). This made life in Judea difficult, especially for Christians, so it is no wonder that Josephus says that many of the inhabitants of Judea fled out of the country at this time: "entire toparchies were brought to desolation; and **a great**

many of the people left their own country, and flew into foreign provinces" [*War* 2:277 (2.14.2)]. This most likely included some Christians who had not already abandoned Palestine in AD 62-63.

Like Albinus and Festus before him, Florus continued to provoke the Zealots, pushing them further and further toward open rebellion [*War* 2:282-283 (2.14.3)].

The Neronic Persecution and the Great Tribulation (AD 64)

The Neronic persecution was one of the most significant factors in the history of the church just before the Parousia. But as significant as it is for our understanding, it has been almost totally ignored by futurists. And too many preterists have likewise underestimated its impact upon the pre-70 church. So, it is appropriate for us to spend some time with it, if for no other reason than to memorialize the horrific deaths of so many of our dear first century brothers and sisters, to whom this book is dedicated.

The Jews wanted to wipe out the Church, but instead got wiped out by the Romans. This is similar to what happened in the Babylonian captivity for the Jews. Haman the Amalekite tried to wipe out the Jews, but ended up being hung on his own gallows, with his Amalekite kinsmen being wiped out also. It is therefore not surprising to find that the *Epistle of Barnabas* (12:9) referred to the Jewish enemies of the church as Amalekites. This was a very dark time for the Church, and even though it was short-lived, for only two years from 64 to 66, it was extremely intense and killed the majority of the remaining Christians, and forced the remainder into hiding until the rapture. There was no other time of persecution on the pre-70 church as intense as this one. Therefore, it appears that the Neronic Persecution must have been the "Great Tribulation" that Jesus warned them about.

The apostate Jewish Christians, like Demas (2 Tim 4:10), who had lapsed back into Judaism (and therefore missed the rapture) would have been destroyed along with the Diaspora Jewish communities in the Summer and early Fall of AD 66, since they would be under suspicion of being sympathetic to the Jewish revolt in Judea. The Gentile citizens rose up against their Jewish inhabitants and either killed them or expelled them from their cities and forced them to flee for refuge to Judea. And the war in Judea was certainly a time of persecution and tribulation upon the Jews, but it had no effect upon the Christians who had already been raptured by that time. This was certainly a time of tribulation upon the unbelieving Jews, but it was not "THE Great Tribulation" that came upon the Church.

Tribulation versus the Great Tribulation

What is not well understood by most is that there are at least three phases of tribulation mentioned in our New Testament. As we will see, the second of these is the *Neronic persecution*. We will look at those texts in the New Testament which mention a Great Tribulation, and try to identify which tribulation they are referring to, and where it fits into the overall sequence of endtime events. In the New Testament, the Greek word for *tribulation* (Gk. *thlipsis*) is used 45 times in the following 43 verses:

Matt 13:21; 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 4:17; 13:19, 24; John 16:21, 33; Acts 7:10–11; 11:19; 14:22; 20:23; Rom 2:9; 5:3 (twice); 8:35; 12:12; 1 Cor 7:28; 2 Cor 1:4 (twice), 8; 2:4; 4:17; 6:4; 7:4; 8:2, 13; Eph 3:13; Php 1:16; 4:14; Col 1:24; 1 Th 1:6; 3:3, 7; 2 Th 1:4, 6; Heb 10:33; James 1:27; Rev 1:9; 2:9–10, 22; **7:14**.

This Greek word THLIPSIS as used in the New Testament refers to at least three different periods of persecution or distress:

1. *General Persecution on the Church (AD 30-64)*: Matt 13:21 (Mk 4:17); Matt 24:9-13; Jn 16:33; Acts 11:19; 14:22; 20:23; Rom 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 1 Cor 7:28; 2 Cor 1:4; 1:8; 2:4; 4:17; 6:4; 7:4; 8:2; Eph. 3:13; Php. 1:16; 4:14; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess 1:6; 3:3; 3:7; 2 Thess 1:4; Heb 10:33; Rev 2:9-10; cf. Matt 10:16-42. These verses talk about the persecution the Church suffered throughout the period from Pentecost to the Neronic Persecution.

2. *Great Tribulation on the Church (AD 64-66)*: Matt 24:21-29; Rev 1:9; 2:22; Rev 7:14. Comparing all three accounts of the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21), we can see that the Great Tribulation was that intensification of trouble (the Neronic persecution in AD 64-66) right before the Parousia. Matt 24:29 states that the Parousia occurred “immediately after the [Great] Tribulation.” It

did not last long (two years or less), but it was extremely intense, and it was cut short by the outbreak of the war with Rome in AD 66. Then the wrath began to be poured out upon the Jews.

3. *Wrath Poured Out Upon the Jews (AD 66-70)*: Matt 3:7 (Lk 3:7); Lk 21:22-23; Rom 2:5-10; Rom 5:9 (saints saved from wrath); Rom 9:22; Eph 5:6 (Col 3:6); 1 Thess 1:10 (saints saved from wrath, cf. 1 Thess 5:9); 1 Thess 2:16; 2 Thess 1:6-10; Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 12:12; 14:8-10; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 18:3; 19:15; cf. Matt. 23:29-39. These passages show that the wrath outpouring began with the Parousia, which occurred "immediately after the tribulation." The Parousia was a three and a half years presence of Christ to judge. It was not just a one-day event.

The Great Tribulation

What a difference the Neronic persecution makes in our understanding of the great tribulation and the flight of the Christians out of Jerusalem and Judea. It is the 800-pound gorilla in the room which everyone (both futurists AND preterists) have mostly ignored. It greatly helps us to understand both the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24) and the book of Revelation.

Traditionally, most futurists and many preterists have been under the impression that the flight to Pella did not occur until the withdrawal of Cestius Gallus in late 66, and that the great tribulation upon the Jews (the wrath outpouring) did not occur until after Vespasian began the war (AD 67-73). Thus the Neronic persecution has traditionally been left totally out of consideration. But when we plug the Neronic persecution back into the historical picture where it belongs, it changes the whole chronological landscape and sequencing of events in the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation. It means that the Christian escape to Pella must have occurred between late 62 and early 64, before the Neronic persecution began in late 64.

The great tribulation that both Jesus and the book of Revelation mention (Matt 24:21 and Rev 7:14), was the Neronic persecution upon the Church (AD 64-66) – NOT the pouring out of wrath upon the Jews (AD 67-73). It was the unbelieving Jews who fled from Judea in Nov 66 when Cestius broke off his attack. The Christians had already either left in AD 63, been killed in the Neronic persecution (AD 64-65), or been raptured by that time (late 66). There were no true Christians left in Judea after the Neronic persecution broke out, unless a few might have disobeyed the warning to leave and somehow escaped detection during the Neronic persecution. There probably was a mixture of true and false Christians who fled to Pella and other parts of the Transjordan, Decapolis, and Syria before the Neronic persecution broke out (late 62 to early 64). By the time of Cestius Gallus' attack on Jerusalem (Nov 66), the Parousia had already begun (May 66) and the angels had already gathered all of the remaining "elect" Christians in the rapture (June 66). The Unitarian Judaizers (Ebionites, Nazaraeans), Gnostics, and other pseudo-Christians were the ones who were left behind.

In spite of the fact that the word "thlipsis" is used 45 times in the New Testament, only four of those occurrences have the word "great" attached to them. The Greek phrase "great tribulation" (THLIPSIS MEGAS) occurs only in these four texts:

Matt. 24:21 For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. [great tribulation upon Christians]

Acts 7:11 Now a famine and **great trouble** came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. [great tribulation upon God's people Israel]

Rev. 2:22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into **great tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds. [great trib upon immoral wicked pseudo-Christians]

Rev. 7:14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the **great tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This last reference in Rev. 7:14 is very interesting, since it is obviously referring to Christians, a great multitude of whom were killed in some "great tribulation" and were "standing before the throne of God" in heaven (Rev 7:15). Notice in Rev. 7:9-17 that this "great multitude which no one could count" came "from every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues." They were from all the Gentile nations, standing before the throne in heaven, after being killed on earth in the great tribulation. How does this text define the "great tribulation"? It is obviously NOT referring to the wrath outpouring upon the Jews during their war with Rome. Instead, it is referring to some great persecution upon the Church which killed countless

numbers of Gentile Christians who were now there in heaven before the throne praising God. So we see that at least one of these occurrences of the phrase "great tribulation" clearly refers to a great persecution upon the Church (i.e., the Neronic persecution).

Most futurists and even some preterists think that the troubles encountered by the Jews in their war with Rome was the Great Tribulation. While it is true that the Jews did have great tribulation during their war with Rome, the New Testament writers usually refer to that as the outpouring of “wrath” or “vengeance.” As we have seen from the list of verses above, the word “tribulation” predominantly refers to persecution upon the Church. The troubles and distresses that the Jews encountered during their war with Rome should more appropriately be referred to as “wrath.” Therefore, the Great Tribulation that is spoken of as occurring before the Jewish war was the persecution of Christians.

In his discourses, Jesus explained that the disciples would suffer much tribulation in order to get the gospel out to the whole Roman world (Luke 21:8-28) “and then the End will come” (Matt 24:14). Some of them would be killed, and then afterwards their persecutors would be judged (cf. Matt. 23:29-39 and Luke 12:46). At the end of that process of fulfilling the Great Commission under hardship and persecution, there would be a short, but very intense, period of *Great Tribulation* (Matt 24:21-22). This was the Neronic persecution, which began soon after the fire in Rome (July 19, 64). Because Nero was blamed for ordering the fires to be started, he shifted the blame to the Christians (Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44). Tacitus is the main source for information about the Neronic persecution, although Suetonius hints at it (*Nero* 16). The most surprising silence about it comes from Josephus who was in Rome at the very time the fire broke out, and for over a year afterwards during the Neronic persecution, yet not a peep out of him about the fire or the persecution. B. H. Warmington was puzzled by this silence, and supposed it meant that “almost the entire Christian community at Rome was destroyed” (*Nero: Reality and Legend*, p. 127).

This intense persecution saw many Christians fall away from the faith, and many of the faithful killed (as we can see alluded to in Rev 7:9-17). The Neronic persecution drastically reduced the number of Christians left alive on earth (cf. Matt 24:21-22; Luke 18:6-8). Jesus said the Church would go through the tribulation (Matt 24:21-28, cf. Rev 7:14), but Paul repeatedly reminded them that they would not have to go through the wrath (1 Thess 1:10; Rom 5:9; Matt 3:7; Rom 2:5-8; 1 Thess 5:9). Instead, they would be relieved of their persecution, rescued out of it, and rewarded in Christ's presence (2 Cor 4:17; cf. Mt 5:12; Rom 8:18) while their enemies were being destroyed.

The Neronic persecution (or Great Tribulation) was a time of testing and purification for Christians. It removed the insincere, lukewarm, sleepers, and false brethren from the Church. Those who kept the faith (in life or in death) were rewarded at the Parousia (by the resurrection and rapture). Those who failed the test (by lapsing back into Judaism) were destroyed with their fellow unbelieving Jews in AD 70. This short period of intense persecution (late 64 until early 66) was “cut short” by the revolt of the Jews against Rome. When the war broke out in late 66, that was a turning point in the Great Tribulation. The Jews and Romans both had to turn their attention to the war effort. The Great Tribulation was cut off, and the time arrived for the wrath to be poured out upon those who had persecuted the Church.

Below is the sequence of events that we need to fix in our memory. This will help us tremendously as we try to make sense out of the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation:

Spring 61 - Paul in prison in Rome
Spring 62 - James killed in Judea
Spring 62 - John exiled to Patmos where he wrote the Apocalypse
Summer 62 - The book of Revelation warned Christians to get out of Judea before the Neronic persecution (great tribulation) began.
Fall 62 or Winter 63 - Paul wrote the book of Hebrews which also warned the Christians to leave Jerusalem before the Neronic persecution (great tribulation) began.
Spring 64 - Last two epistles of the NT (Jude and 2 Peter) were written
Summer 64 - Fire in Rome and Neronic Persecution began
Fall 64--Spring 66 - Neronic persecution decimated the Church (especially in Rome)
April 66 - Angelic Armies seen in the sky, signaling the Parousia had begun
June 66 - Pentecost - dead were raised and living were changed
August 66 - The Zealot rebellion and the wrath-outpouring began
August 70 - The Temple was burned. Destruction of Jerusalem

During the Neronic persecution, the saints were under extreme hardship just to stay alive. Their days

of sharing the gospel were over. No one would listen. No one wanted to join a hated religion that would only get them killed. This seems to be the meaning of Rev 22:11 where Apostle John was told to leave the wrong-doers and filthy folks alone, let them follow their own way now. Trying to convert them and preach to them would only get you killed. So the Christians had to stop preaching the gospel and go into hiding to stay alive. No one who was not a Christian already would dare associate with them for fear of persecution and death. This is also when the **great apostasy** occurred. Not only were the majority of Christians killed in the Neronic persecution, but a bunch more of them fell away from the faith and denied that they were Christians in order to escape persecution and death. It was only a small remnant of "elect" saints who "lived and remained" until the Parousia.

So, there were not a lot of true Christians left alive after the Neronic persecution and its related great apostasy. Those few true saints (the "elect") who did remain alive until the Parousia, were raptured at the Parousia in June AD 66. The beginning of Christ's Parousia presence was clearly signaled when they saw the angelic armies in the sky above Palestine (April 66). Christ came with his angels to raise the dead, rescue his living and remaining saints, and to reward and punish – just a few months before the Jewish war started in August 66.

During the three and a half years of his visitation (AD 66-70), he poured out God's wrath upon those who had persecuted His saints. The Zealots were successful in repulsing Cestius Gallus from Judea, who suffered heavy losses of men and equipment. This was reported to Nero, who was in Greece at the time (Nov. AD 66). Nero dispatched Vespasian and Titus to Antioch and Alexandria to begin gathering the troops for the war. Vespasian came through Turkey on his way to Antioch (Dec. AD 66).

How the Tribulation Fits into the Olivet Discourse

If we define the Great Tribulation as only being the wrath that was poured out on Jerusalem, then it means that Christ did not come in judgment upon the Jews until after the Romans had destroyed the Jews (Matt 24:29). However, Christ was supposed to come *before* the wrath was poured out to give relief to his elect who were already suffering in the Neronic persecution. This means that the wrath upon the Jews and the tribulation upon the church cannot be the same thing. The tribulation has to be first, before the wrath outpouring.

We know from studying the Olivet Discourse in all three synoptic accounts (Matthew-Mark-Luke) that none of the three gospels have a consecutive-sequential list of the events, especially when it is compared with the historical data in the book of Acts and Josephus. All three accounts have a group of events mixed together in a somewhat chronological framework, with a few flash-backs and flash-forwards. It is easy to see that all three accounts were written BEFORE the Neronic persecution and Jewish war, since if they were written afterwards they would not be so jumbled and out of order.

And there is a very good reason why Jesus stated these things in this confusing way. He was making it practically impossible for anyone, including his disciples, to know “the day and the hour” in advance. He gave them enough information to know what to look for and what to expect, but not enough to know the timing or exact sequence. We can only imagine how hard it must have been for those first century saints to analyze the Olivet Discourse, trying to understand the time and nature of fulfillment of all these things.

Sorting all that out and arranging it in the chronological order in which it actually happened historically is a real challenge, even for us today. A quick glance at all the various arrangements that have been developed just within the Premillennial camp would suffice to show this. But the Amils, Postmils, Partial Preterists, and Full Preterists have different arrangements as well.

The only way this puzzle will ever be solved is by lifting all the individual sections out of the text and laying them down beside the historical events to which they belong. That is one of the reasons why our historical studies here are so important. We are constructing that chronological list of actual events that we can eventually use to match up perfectly with all the predicted events in the Olivet Discourse. That is what we will attempt to do in the following section.

About the Charts Below: Sequencing the Tribulation in Relation to the Parousia, the Rescue, and the Wrath-Outpouring

One of the reasons all of us misinterpreted Matthew 24 for so many years is because we failed to understand the concept of Parousia, as well as the sequence of events that were supposed to occur at the Parousia.

Growing up in the Baptist church as a futurist, my concept of the Second Coming was a one-day event, when Christ would split the sky and round up all His saints (living and dead) just before the globe was engulfed in a thermo-nuclear holocaust. All of that was supposed to happen not only in one day's time, but "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

That was my concept of the Second Coming – a "blink of the eye" event. There was no thought whatsoever of an extended period of time in which Christ would be present in the Unseen realm above to reward His people and judge His enemies.

But when I became a Preterist, I began to notice all the things that Jesus and the Apostles promised that He would accomplish at His return, many of which implied much more than a one-day "blink of the eye" event.

Then I found out that the word Parousia literally means an extended visit, or a presence with someone for an extended period of time. It is this extended visit idea that will really help us here in our understanding of the Olivet Discourse and its statements about the Great Tribulation.

We will be referring to a series of charts called *Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse*. Those charts are copied on the following pages. We will look at three different sections of that chart, skipping back and forth between the pages. These charts trace the chronological and sequential fulfillment of the tribulation and the wrath outpouring which followed. We need to put these events in their proper sequence, in the order in which they actually occurred historically. When we do that, it really helps us understand both the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation. We will look closely at the words of Jesus in his Olivet Discourse found in all three synoptic gospels. We need to get real familiar with the charts before reading the rest of our comments about it on the following pages after the charts:

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17

Explanation: Luke is the most helpful in determining the chronological sequence, since he "searched all of this out very carefully and put it in consecutive order," and was writing in AD 61-62 after a lot of this had already happened, whereas Matthew was written before AD 40 when most of "these things" were still future. This is an attempt to arrange all this in the order that it actually happened, but it is not perfect. It is apparent that none of the four accounts are in a strict historical sequence. Luke appears to be the more chronologically accurate, especially in Lk 21:12-19 where he explicitly states that this section belongs "before all the things" that he had just mentioned in Lk 21:8-11. Otherwise, Luke's account (ch. 21) seems to flow mostly in sync with the actual historical fulfillment. The same is not true for Matthew and Mark, which both have some sections which flash-back or flash-forward.

1. Overview of the whole Transition Period (AD 30-66)

Overview of the whole transition period from Pentecost to the Parousia.

Notice the statement in **Lk 21:12** about **"before all these things."** Luke is helping to clear the confusion a little by pointing out that the persecution on the saints would come first before the wrath was poured out upon their persecutors. Some of the events mentioned in this section (Lk 21:12-19) were already past when Luke wrote in AD 61-62, while others were ongoing or still future.

Probable references to the Neronic Persecution:
Matt 10:21-22
Matt 10:28-31
Lk 21:16-19

Rapture?
Matt. 10:22 - "saved"
Lk 21:19 - "gain your lives"

Matt. 10:16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.
Matt. 10:17 “But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;
Matt. 10:18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.
Matt. 10:19 “But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.
Matt. 10:20 “For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.
Matt. 10:21 “ Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.
Matt. 10:22 “ You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.
Matt. 10:23 ¶ “But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not exhaust all the [refuge] cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes....
Matt. 10:26 “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.
Matt. 10:27 “What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.
Matt. 10:28 “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
Matt. 10:29 “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.
Matt. 10:30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
Matt. 10:31 “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Luke 21:12 “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.
Luke 21:13 “ It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.
Luke 21:14 “ So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;
Luke 21:15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.
Luke 21:16 “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,
Luke 21:17 and you will be hated by all because of My name.
Luke 21:18 “Yet not a hair of your head will perish.
Luke 21:19 “ By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Color Code:

Blue - Similar Language
Pink - Tribulation references
Green - Timing statements
Red - Rescue, Salvation, Gathering, and Rapture
Yellow - special or cryptic statements about the Parousia and Destruction of Jerusalem

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17
2. Mid-Transition Period (AD 40-62) These are events which happened throughout the transition period, mainly during the years AD 40-60.	**Matt. 24:4** And Jesus answered and said to them, " See to it that no one misleads you. **Matt. 24:5** "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. **Matt. 24:6** "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. **Matt. 24:7** "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. **Matt. 24:8** " But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.	**Mark 13:5** And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. **Mark 13:6** "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many. **Mark 13:7** "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. **Mark 13:8** "For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.	**Luke 21:8** And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. **Luke 21:9** "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." **Luke 21:10** Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, **Luke 21:11** and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.	

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17
3. Late Transition Period (mainly AD 62-66) **Matt 24:9-14** (and its parallel in Mk 13:12-13) may be the most direct and clearest allusions to the Neronic persecution as a part of the Tribulation (AD 63-64). The General Persecution and the falling away (apostasy) intensified during the latter part of the Transition Period, just as the apostles were finishing the great commission and the **Neronic persecution** was just about to break out. Paul was arrested (AD 58), James was killed (AD 62), John sent into exile (AD 62), Neronic persecution (AD 64), when Paul and Peter were killed.	**Matt. 24:9** ¶ " Then they will deliver you to **tribulation**, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. **Matt. 24:10** "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. **Matt. 24:11** "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. **Matt. 24:12** "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. **Matt. 24:13** " But the one who endures to the end, he will be **saved**. **Matt. 24:14** "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.	**Mark 13:9** ¶ "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. **Mark 13:10** " The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. **Mark 13:11** " When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. **Mark 13:12** "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. **Mark 13:13** " You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be **saved**.		

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17
4. Late Transition Period (mainly AD 62-66) Some of the saints (the elect) would evidently survive the Neronic persecution and remain alive until the Parousia, at which time they would be "saved". This salvation is not forgiveness of sins. It is the rapture which rescued them out of the tribulation and "saved" them from the wrath that was about to come, and gathered them to be with Christ. Notice how obvious the Parousia would be. It would not be hidden out in the "wilderness" or "inner rooms" but out in the open for all to see (like lightning in the sky). The disciples knew what to look for, and would have recognized the time of His visitation. They would not be left around still waiting for it or wondering about it later.	**Matt. 24:22** "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. **Matt. 24:23** " Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or ' There He is,' do not believe him. **Matt. 24:24** "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. **Matt. 24:25** "Behold, I have told you in advance. **Matt. 24:26** "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. **Matt. 24:27** " For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the Parousia of the Son of Man be.	**Mark 13:20** "Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. **Mark 13:21** "And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; **Mark 13:22** for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. **Mark 13:23** "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.		**Luke 17:20** Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; **Luke 17:21** nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." **Luke 17:22** And He said to the disciples, " The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. **Luke 17:23** " They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them. **Luke 17:24** " For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part ... so will the Son of Man be in His day.

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17
5. Right After the Neronic Persecution, at the beginning of the Parousia, when the elect were gathered (raptured), in mid-to-late AD 66 Which "tribulation" is Jesus referring to? Only to "those days" of wrath upon the Jews that are mentioned in verses 15-21 (sect. 6 below), or the tribulation upon the Church? To better harmonize with Paul's sequence of events (Trib-Parousia-Rescue-Wrath) in his two Thess. letters, it seems better to view this tribulation as the persecution on the church, including the Neronic persecution that was mentioned in both vv. 9-14 and 22-27 (sections 3 and 4 above). The angelic armies signaling Christ's Parousia were seen in the clouds above *right after the Neronic Persecution*. This was when Jesus sent His angels to gather the elect off the earth (rapture). Luke refers to it as their "redemption." This gathering of the elect "cut short" the tribulation.	**Matt. 24:29** "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **Matt. 24:30** "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they** will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. **Matt. 24:31** "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.	**Mark 13:24** ¶ "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, **Mark 13:25** and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. **Mark 13:26** "Then **they** will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. **Mark 13:27** "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.	**Luke 21:25** ¶ "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, **Luke 21:26** men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **Luke 21:27** "Then **they** will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **Luke 21:28** "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up **your** heads, because **your** redemption is drawing near."	**FURTHER NOTES:** If we limit the **tribulation** mentioned here to the Jewish war, then it means that Jesus did not come until after the Jewish war was over. Yet, that cannot be true, since the whole purpose of His coming was to orchestrate their destruction at the hands of the Romans. Furthermore, Josephus tells us that the angelic armies signaling His presence were seen **before the war began**, not after the war was over. This means that the tribulation here must at least include the persecution upon the church, which reached its pinnacle in the Neronic persecution.

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17
6. The End Has Come Wrath Begins (AD 66-73) When **Gessius Florus** (the Roman governor) brought three cohorts of soldiers to seize the temple gold (Spring 66), to force the Jews to bring coins with Caesar's image into the Temple, then **Eleazar b. Ananias** blew the shofar and took control of the temple with his soldiers. He then continued to control the temple until near the end of the war when John of Gischala overpowered him. The references to "tribulation" in Matt 24:21 and Mk 13:19 are pointing to the "days of vengeance, great distress, and wrath" upon the Jews which Luke's account mentions (Lk 21:22-23). This was tribulation upon the Jews, NOT upon the church. That means that Jesus used the term "tribulation" in regard to both the tribulation on the church, as well as the wrath upon the Jews. Lk 21:24 also refers to the aftermath of the destruction by the Romans.	**Matt. 24:15** ¶ "Therefore when **you** see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), **Matt. 24:16** then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. **Matt. 24:17** " Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. **Matt. 24:18** " Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. **Matt. 24:19** "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! **Matt. 24:20** "But pray that **your** flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. **Matt. 24:21** "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.	**Mark 13:14** ¶ "But when **you** see the Abomination of Desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. **Mark 13:15** " The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; **Mark 13:16** and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. **Mark 13:17** "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! **Mark 13:18** "But pray that it may not happen in the winter. **Mark 13:19** "For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.	**Luke 21:20** "But when **you** see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. **Luke 21:21** "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; **Luke 21:22** because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. **Luke 21:23** "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; **Luke 21:24** and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.	**Luke 17:31** "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. **Luke 17:32** " Remember Lot's wife. **Luke 17:33** " Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17
7. Exhortations to Be Alert and Stay Faithful Just before the **Parousia** and the **Rapture**, He told them to stay alert and not miss it, and warned them about the effect of the Parousia upon the wicked and unbelievers. Notice the word Parousia (an extended visitation in reward and judgment) is used twice here in this section. Notice the red highlighted references to the righteous being allowed to escape the wrath and get out of harm's way before the wrath descended upon the wicked. Noah entering the ark and Lot escaping Sodom seem to be typological or allegorical allusions to the rapture which rescued the righteous out of harm's way to escape the wrath and enter into an ark of safety where they would be allowed to stand before the Son of Man in the unseen realm while the wrath was being poured out upon the wicked on earth. The Romans started in the north and worked their way down to the south, pushing everything	**Matt. 24:32** ¶ "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; **Matt. 24:33** so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. **Matt. 24:34** "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. **Matt. 24:35** " Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. **Matt. 24:36** "But of that day and hour no one knows, not ...the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. **Matt. 24:37** "For the Parousia of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. **Matt. 24:38** "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, **Matt. 24:39** and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the Parousia of the Son of Man be.	**Mark 13:28** ¶ "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. **Mark 13:29** "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. **Mark 13:30** "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. **Mark 13:31** "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. **Mark 13:32** " But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. **Mark 13:33** ¶ "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. **Mark 13:34** " It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. **(continued next page)**	**Luke 21:29** ¶ Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; **Luke 21:30** as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. **Luke 21:31** "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. **Luke 21:32** "... this generation will not pass away until all things take place. **Luke 21:33** " Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. **Luke 21:34** ¶ " Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; **Luke 21:35** for it will come upon **all those who dwell on the face of all the earth**. **Luke 21:36** "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."	**Luke 17:26** " And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: **Luke 17:27** they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. **Luke 17:28** " It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; **Luke 17:29** but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. **Luke 17:30** "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.... **Luke 17:34** "I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. **Luke 17:35** " There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. **Luke 17:36** ["Two men will be in the field; one will be

Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse

Event	Mat 10, 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Luke 17
toward Jerusalem, where they would be bottled up for the siege. As they worked their way down, they took away some as captives, and left others to work the land as slaves to the Roman overlords. The slave traders came along with the Romans, and were like vultures (eagles) taking the spoils of war. Notice how Matthew (24:28) did not know where this reference to the vultures belonged, but Luke correctly attached it to the section about "one taken and one left." Mark left it out altogether. But Luke shows it referred the wicked who were taken away into exile, slavery, and death (Lk 17:34-37). Luke has the better arrangement here.	**Matt. 24:40** "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one ... left. **Matt. 24:41** " Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. **[Matt. 24:28** " Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.] **Matt. 24:42** "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming **Matt. 24:43** "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time ... the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. **Matt. 24:44** "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.	**Mark 13:35** "Therefore, be on the alert — for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning — **Mark 13:36** in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. **Mark 13:37** "What I say to you I say to all, ' Be on the alert!'"		taken and the other will be left."] **Luke 17:37** And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, " Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered."

Explanation of the Chronological Charts Above

A. We need to know what the Tribulation period is, and how it fits into the overall sequence of events mentioned in Matt. 24.

1. We know from several New Testament texts that the faithful elect Christians would have to suffer persecution and tribulation before the Parousia, but would NOT have to go through the wrath-outpouring at the Parousia. For instance:

   • 1 Thess 5:9 - For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation...
   • Rom 5:9 - ...how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath...
   • 1 Thess 1:10 - ...wait for His Son from heaven... who rescues us from the wrath to come
   • Rev 3:10 - I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is about to come upon the whole world...

2. We also know **when that wrath was supposed to be poured out**. It was during the Parousia after the saints were rescued out of harm's way. We see this very sequence of events laid out for us in Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians:
   a. In 1 Thess. 1:10 Paul taught that the saints would be rescued from the wrath that would be poured out on their persecutors. That means:
      (1) The **tribulation and persecution of the saints** comes first,
      (2) Followed by their **rescue** out of that tribulation at the Parousia,
      (3) Just before the **wrath is poured out** upon their persecutors.
   b. That same sequence is found in 2 Thess 1:4-10 where Paul indicates that at the coming of Christ He would do these two things in this particular order:
      (1) Give **relief** to the saints (2 Thess 1:7)
      (2) Deal out **retribution** to the disobedient (2 Thess 1:8)
   c. So, here is the order of events: **tribulation** on the church first, **rescue** of the saints from the tribulation at the Parousia, then the **wrath** is poured out on their wicked unbelieving persecutors.
   d. Repeat that sequence three times out loud: **Tribulation, Parousia, Rescue, Wrath** (**TPRW**)
   e. Keep that sequence clearly in mind as we look at Matthew 24

3. Furthermore, it is clear from looking at the statements in these two Thessalonian letters that Paul is drawing this sequence of events out of the Olivet Discourse.
4. Several Bible teachers, both preterists and futurists, have found almost two dozen similarities and connections between the Olivet Discourse and Paul's statements here in these two letters.
5. Since Paul was speaking under inspiration, his statements have to be in perfect harmony with the words of Jesus, and vice versa.
6. This means that the sequence of events has to be the same in both the Olivet Discourse and the Thessalonian letters.
7. That seems obvious to us, but it is not so obvious to the Pre-Trib Rapture guys like Tommy Ice, who try to ignore the sequence in Paul's epistles and obfuscate the sequence found in the Olivet Discourse.
8. So, we need to take a look at the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 to see if we can find the same sequence of events there.
9. Let's look at Matthew 24:15-22 and how it is arranged on the chart above.

B. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the context surrounding these three sections of the chart: Mt. 24:1-14, 24:15-21, and 24:22-31.

C. The Problem Defined: One thing we notice right away when we look at Matt. 24:15-22 is that the "great tribulation" mentioned in verse 21 seems to occur AFTER the Abomination of Desolation appeared and the Christians fled from Jerusalem and Judea.

1. If the Abomination of Desolation (v. 15) was the arrival of Roman armies around Jerusalem in AD 66, then the flight of saints away from there (vv. 16-20) is part of the great tribulation (v. 21) which would be cut short for the elect saints (but not for the unbelieving Jews).
2. But there is a problem with this scenario. The futurists (and even some preterists) assume that the **tribulation** mentioned here in verses 16-28 is ONLY talking about the **wrath** that was poured out upon the Jews during their war with Rome.
3. If that is the case, then it means that the saints did not suffer tribulation until after the war started, and their rescue from that tribulation could not have come until after the war started.
4. Furthermore, it is clear from Matt 24:29 (and its parallel in Mark 13:24) that Christ would not come until "after the tribulation of those days." In the previous context it seems that the "tribulation of those days" is a reference to the "the days of vengeance" and "wrath to this people," according to Luke's account (Lk 21:22-23).
5. This means that Christ would not come until AFTER the wrath-outpouring was finished, which was after AD 70. And if Christ did not come until AFTER the wrath was poured out, then the saints were not rescued out of the wrath after all. This means the saints had to endure the whole tribulation (or wrath-outpouring).
6. Notice the sequence here – Matthew 24 has the wrath already being poured out before Christ came to pour it out! (**T-W-P-R**)
7. But Paul has already indicated that the saints would NOT have to go through the wrath. Christ would "rescue them from the coming wrath" before that wrath came (1 Th. 1:10)! (**T-P-R-W**)
8. Do you see the sequencing problem there? Now, how do we solve it?

D. The Problem Solved:

1. Notice that Matt 24:29 says that Christ does not come until "after the tribulation of those days." What is the "tribulation of those days"? In the previous context, it seems to be the wrath-outpouring during the war with Rome. But if we define the Great Tribulation as **ONLY** being the wrath that was poured out on Jerusalem, then it means that Christ did not come to rescue his saints and pour out the wrath UNTIL the wrath had already been poured out and the "tribulation of those days" was already over.
2. The solution must therefore be related to our definition of the "tribulation." If the tribulation is only talking about the troubles that came upon the Jews after the war broke out in Judea, then we have a seeming contradiction between Jesus and Paul.
3. However, if we define the tribulation as the whole period of persecution upon the church (including the Neronic persecution) and their difficulties in Judea just before the Parousia and the outbreak of the war, then it would solve the problem. The tribulation then must include the persecution on the church that occurred before the wrath was poured out. The only question is whether the context will allow that redefinition, as well as the reassignment of some verses to that tribulation on the church? This was the idea behind my chart, and as we can see from comparing the four different accounts of the synoptic apocalypse, none of the accounts were in strict chronological sequence anyway. So, that implies that we are free to rearrange them according to the sequence in which they actually occur.
4. This means that the tribulation upon the church and the wrath upon the Jews are two successive phases of the one combined tribulation-wrath period. The tribulation has to be first, before the wrath outpouring. If we run that definition of tribulation back through the context, like we have done in the chart, it will work very well for us.
5. Notice these texts especially:
   a. **Matt 24:9-14** – "tribulation" here applies ONLY to the Christians, and seems to refer to the intensification of the persecution under Nero
   b. **Matt 24:22-28** – returns to talking about the "tribulation" upon the Church – compare the language here in this section with the language in Matt 24:9-14.
6. Do you see the connection? They are both talking about the tribulation upon the Christians. Therefore, Matt 24:29 HAS TO INCLUDE the Neronic persecution in its definition of "tribulation" since that is what the previous verses (22-28) are talking about. It was "those days" (Neronic persecution) that were cut short for the saints, so that the "elect" could be rescued.
7. Notice that Christ had already stated in the previous context that He would "save" them from the tribulation by "cutting short" the tribulation. But the wrath-outpouring was not "cut short" for the

Jews. It continued until Jerusalem was totally devastated. So, it must be some other tribulation that was cut short, besides the wrath-outpouring. That could be the tribulation upon the church, such as the Neronic persecution.

8. But that raises another question: How could the tribulation on the Christians be said to be "cut short" (or ended) if the Christians were still left around on earth while the wrath was being poured out? That means they would still be subject to persecution and tribulation. What kind of "salvation" or "rescue" would that be? Nor would it fit Jesus' description of the angelic gathering of the elect mentioned in Matt 24:31.
9. Notice all the references to "cut short" (**24:22**) and "saved" (**24:13, 22**). This is not talking about the saints finally getting forgiveness of sins given to them when the tribulation was cut short! They already had forgiveness of sins. So, what was this "**cutting short**" of the tribulation which "**saved**" the elect? How was their tribulation cut short, and how were they saved from it? We already know how Paul would answer that ("**rescues** us from the coming wrath" - 1 Thess 1:10). And Jesus does not leave us guessing either. Notice **Matt 24:31**. At the Parousia He sent forth his angels to **gather the elect** (the remaining living saints) out of harm's way before he poured out the wrath on the Jews.

Conclusion: We looked at the chart (Chronological Arrangement of the Olivet Discourse) which arranges all the events predicted in Matthew 24 in their proper historical sequence. By doing that, we are able to define what the Tribulation was, and when it occurred in relation to the Parousia and the Wrath outpouring upon the unbelieving Jews. By putting all these events in the order in which they actually occurred historically, it really helps us understand both the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation.

HOW were "these things" fulfilled?

When we ask the HOW question, we are dealing with the NATURE of fulfillment. Most of the time in our interaction with futurists, we focus only on the **TIME** of fulfillment, and never quite get around to explaining the **NATURE** of fulfillment. Part of the reason for that may be that we simply do not have a clear grasp of **HOW** these things were actually fulfilled historically. That is why we all need to get a better grip on first century history. We need to know not only **WHEN** these things occurred, but **HOW** they occurred. History provides both the *timing* and the *nature* of fulfillment.

So, before getting into the actual history of the Jewish revolt in AD 66-70, we need to know what KIND of events the first century saints were expecting to happen in their lifetime. What were they looking for, and expecting to see, hear, and experience in that generation? We have the TIMING of those events pretty well nailed down at this point, but the NATURE of those events is still very fuzzy for a lot of us.

We need to know HOW these things actually happened historically. What was their NATURE of fulfillment? When this material was originally presented at two different seminars in Chicago and Garrettsville, I included a video clip from an atheist who posted a five-part series on YouTube entitled, ***Jesus Was Wrong***. Using several of the TIME statements, especially in Mark 13 and its parallels in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, he showed how Jesus clearly predicted His return in that first century generation, and that since Jesus did not return then as he promised, he has to be labeled a false prophet.

As you can imagine, that YouTube video created a firestorm of reaction from both futurists and preterists. But he came right back in his second and following podcasts showing that futurists are hopelessly out of touch with reality by saying that the return of Jesus is still future. If Jesus didn't come then in the first century, as He promised He would, then He is a false prophet and Christianity is founded on a hoax.

The atheist was much kinder to the preterists who responded to his first video. He gave a thumbs up to preterists for recognizing the significance of the **TIME** statements. However, he sharply criticized preterists for taking a *spiritualizing* approach to the **NATURE** of fulfillment.

He read several of the New Testament eschatological statements which show what the first century saints expected to see, hear and experience at the Parousia, and then made the point that there are no statements coming from any of those saints after AD 70 saying that they actually saw, heard, and experienced those things. To the atheist, that failure to document the fulfillment afterward means only one thing: NON-OCCURRENCE and NON-FULFILLMENT. He accused preterists of *spiritualizing* the fulfillment in order to get around the problem of non-fulfillment.

So this is the place where the Preterist view runs the most risk of being rejected by our fellow Christians. It is easy for Futurists to grasp the TIMING issue, but they immediately want to know HOW this was fulfilled in the first century, and they want to see the documentation for that fulfillment.

Showing that AD 70 was the correct **TIME** of fulfillment is only half of our task. We also need to show **HOW** those things were actually fulfilled in the way those first century saints were expecting. That automatically raises the question about their expectations. We need to know: *What did Jesus promise them that they would see, hear, and experience at His Parousia? and, What did they say they were expecting to see, hear, and experience at His Parousia?*

Here are the two texts that the atheist used to make his point about the non-fulfillment of their expectations (Matt. 24:25-27 and Matt. 24:30):

> **Matt. 24:25-27** "Behold, I have told you in advance. So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, *or,* 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe *them.* For **just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west**, **so will the coming of the Son of Man be**.

> **Matt. 24:30** "And then **the sign** of the Son of Man will **appear in the sky**, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son Of Man coming on the clouds of the sky** with power and great glory.

He showed that in these two texts Jesus promised that His return would be so easy to **SEE** that they could not miss it. They would not have to go out into the wilderness, or into an upper room to find Him. They would **SEE** him coming on the clouds with power and great glory, just as the lightning flashes across the sky.

He repeatedly stressed the point that the return of Christ was going to be a **VISIBLE** event, and therefore an **experienced** event. Since he is not aware of anything like that occurring in the first century, he assumes that Christ did not return, and that the prophecies failed. He says that Preterists are proven wrong precisely at this point because we cannot show a visible and experiential return of Christ in the first century.

I agree that it is not enough to affirm that the **TIME** of fulfillment was in the first century. Deut. 18:22 demands that there be a recognizable fulfillment of those prophecies before we can claim that it has come true. The first century Christians (at least) should have been aware of the occurrence of the Parousia. They were told that they would **SEE** it. Since the post-70 church did not acknowledge Christ's return as having occurred in AD 70, it puts a huge burden of proof upon the Preterist.

This is a serious historical problem that we Preterists have been very slow and reluctant to deal with. We usually just wave our magic spiritualizing wand over the prophecy and claim it was fulfilled in a covenantal or spiritual or metaphysical sense, and then pat ourselves on the back for being so creative.

But that approach is not satisfactory to that atheist on YouTube, nor is it satisfactory to our Futurist brothers who also know that the fulfillment had to be **VISIBLE** and **EXPERIENTIAL**. It was this very problem which forced me (kicking and screaming) to re-examine my concepts on the **NATURE** of fulfillment. My first step was to re-read the whole New Testament asking these three questions:

1. Did Jesus actually **promise** them that they would see, hear, and experience anything at His coming?
2. Do the NT writers make any statements which tell us what their **expectations** were? Did they expect to see, hear, or experience anything at His coming?
3. Or does Jesus indicate that it would be a **non-experiential** event, which they would not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor experience in any cognitive way?

On the next page we will see what I discovered when I read through the whole New Testament:

What Did Jesus Promise? *What Did They Expect?*

Biblical Text	Expectation	How Fulfilled?
Matt. 16:28; 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15; Matt 24:22-24; Lk 18:7-8; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:18; Jude 21; Rev. 2:25;	Some saints would still be alive at the time of His return. But it would not be a huge number. Many would perish in the tribulation.	Some of the original disciples indeed remained alive until AD 66. Not all of the saints died in the tribulation.
1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 6:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:13; Php. 3:20f; Heb. 9:28; Jude 21; 1 Thess 1:10; Rom 8:18-25; 2 Cor. 5:2; Matt. 9:15; Lk. 12:35-40; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:12-13	They were ***eagerly waiting*** and ***longing*** *for* His return. They "***loved*** his appearing" and "***fixed their hope completely***" on it.	Was that intense longing fulfilled? Could they have kept silent about it after being so pumped up about it beforehand?
2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rom. 8:17-25; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:4-9, 13; 5:4; 5:6; Rev. 11:18; 2 Jn. 1:8; Heb. 10:35; Lk. 21:34-36; Rev. 3:10; Lk. 21:28	They were promised rescue, relief, reward, glory, adoption, salvation, redemption, and grace at the return of Christ.	Did they get these things? Did they know they got it? Did they see it and experience it in any way? Why didn't they say something about it later?
2 Thess 1:6-10; Matt 16:28; 1 Jn 2:28--3:2; 1 Thess 2:19; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:1-4; Lk 21:36; Rom 8:18-25; 2 Cor 4:14; 1 Thess 4:17; Col 3:4; 1 Pet 1:7-13; 2:12; 2 Pet 3:12ff; Jude 24; Matt 25:1,6,21,23; Php 2:16 1 Jn. 4:17; Col 1:22; 1 Cor 13:12; Matt. 25:6-10;	They would actually know about His return, and **SEE** Him revealed, **MEET** with Him at His coming, **GLORIFY** Him, **STAND** before Him, and have **GREAT JOY** in His **PRESENCE** at His return.	Did they experience these things? Why didn't they say something about it later? How could they experience all this and then go on with their lives as if nothing ever happened? This would have been a life-changing experience. Life would never be the same.
1 Thess 4:15-17; Jn 14:1-3; Matt 24:31; 2 Thess 2:1 Php 3:14;	**Reunited** and **caught up** together with their departed loved ones, received to Him; gathered, upward call	What was this gathering by the angels, the catching up, the being received to be with Jesus where He was?
2 Cor 5:1-4; Php 3:21; 1 Cor 15:51-54 1 Jn 3:2	Their bodies would be **changed**, transformed, to **be like Christ**	What was this bodily transformation, change?
1 John 2:28; Heb 10:38-39	Would **see Him appear**, and would **not shrink away** from him at his Parousia	Did they see him appear? Did they shrink away from Him at His Parousia?

We need to seriously ask ourselves what these Biblical texts would have meant to the first century saints. How would they have understood these things?

My awareness of these promises and expectations of an experiential return of Christ created another problem for me. Since I now knew that the Parousia must have been seen, heard, witnessed, and experienced by the first century saints, I was baffled by the **lack of documentation** for it. This is the same problem that the Atheist and our Futurist brothers have. They know it was supposed to be seen and experienced. Why don't we hear something afterwards from those saints who saw it and experienced it?

Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. What if they were raptured out of there just like these expectation statements suggest? That would explain why we do not have any statements from them afterwards about

what it was like to **SEE** Him at His coming, and **GLORIFY** Him on that day, and **MARVEL** at Him in the presence of all who had believed. They were gone! Jesus took His bride with Him when He came! And it would explain why the church fathers were so confused later, and why they fell into so many doctrinal deviations in the second century.

Now you can only imagine how stunned I was at this idea. I was not at all fond of the idea of a rapture, but there was no other reasonable explanation for their silence after the Parousia.

But there is a problem with this rapture idea. There are some logistics involved here which need to be carefully dealt with. What kind of rapture are we talking about? Surely not the kind of thing we see described in the *Left Behind* series of books and movies. That kind of rapture would be noticed and documented.

When we start asking questions of this sort about the way in which a supernatural event occurred, we immediately have to start thinking about the **cosmological worldview** of the first century saints. How did they view their world, including the *heavenly realm* and the *earthly realm*?

Cosmology is the study of the universe, including both its **UNSEEN** spiritual realm and its **SEEN** physical realm. Cosmology attempts to explain how both realms interrelate to each other and interact with each other. Notice the contrast between the **invisible** things in the heavens and the **visible** things on the earth mentioned in **Col. 1:16** –

> **Col. 1:16** For by Him all things were created, both **in the heavens** and **on earth**, **visible** and **invisible**, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.

As I began to look at the statements of Jesus and our NT writers (especially Paul, Jude, James, Peter, and John in the book of Revelation) I noticed that they did not have the same concepts about **heaven and earth** that we here in twenty-first-century America do. Surprise! They followed the same cosmological concepts that God's people throughout Biblical times since creation had always believed. The cosmology chart on the next page will help us grasp this.

The reason why so many Christians do not recognize the fulfillment of eschatology at AD 70 is because they do not know what **KIND of event** they are supposed to be looking for. They do not know **HOW it was supposed to be fulfilled cosmologically**. They are looking in all the wrong places for the wrong kind of event. An understanding of Biblical Cosmology is absolutely essential for understanding what kind of events Jesus predicted, and what kind of events the first century saints expected and experienced.

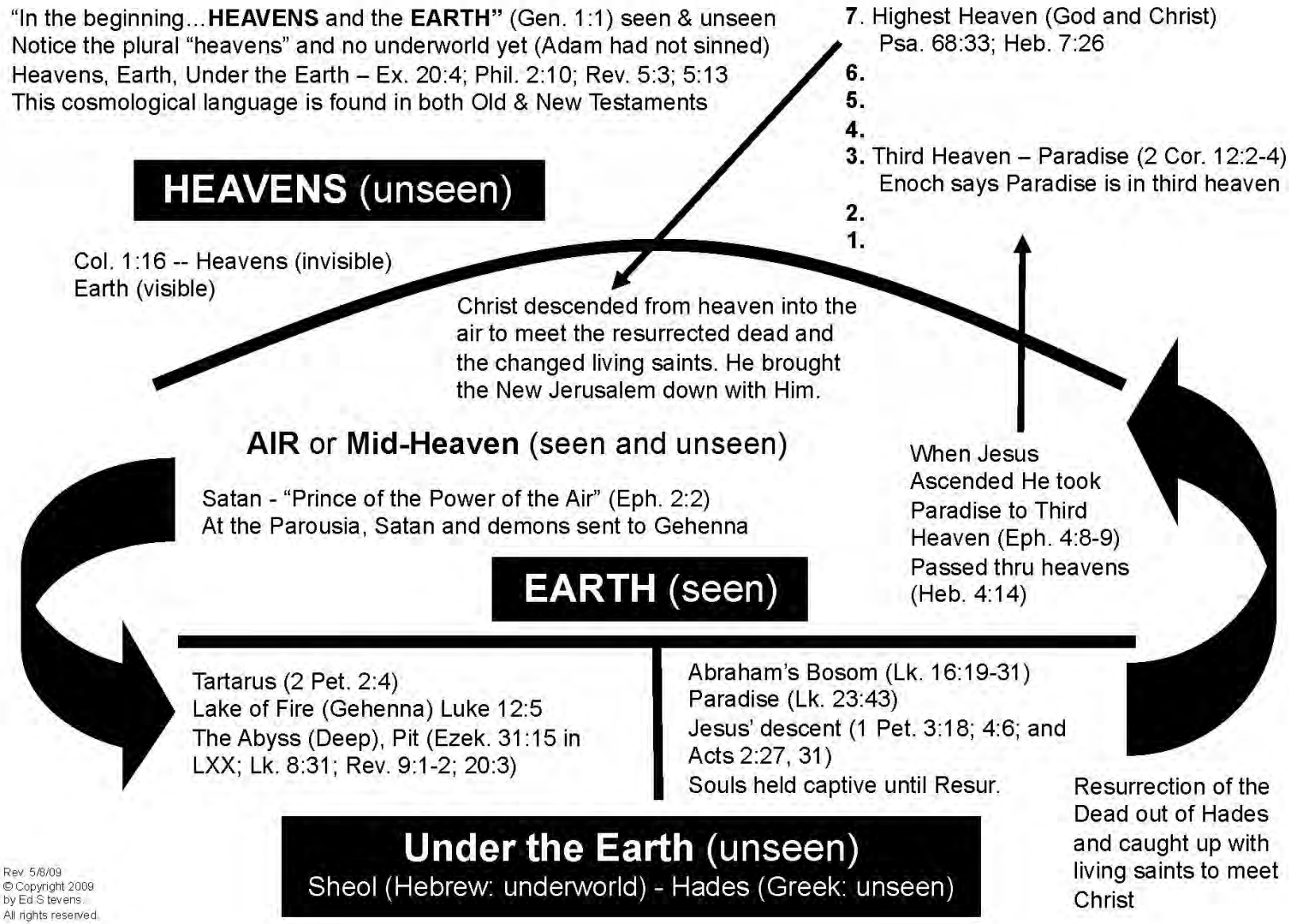
This was my problem. Once I saw the expectation statements, I began struggling with **HOW** those expectations could have been fulfilled according to my understanding of the nature of fulfillment? I began to realize that it was my faulty concept of **cosmology** that was the problem. I needed to go back to the Bible and see what its concept of the SEEN and UNSEEN realms really is. Once I understood Biblical cosmology, then I saw **HOW** all these events (the Parousia, the Resurrection, the Rapture, the Judgment) were supposed to occur. So the nature of fulfillment is directly related to our concepts of cosmology.

In my studies of the relationship between the SEEN and the UNSEEN realms, I noticed that prophets were called **SEERS** in the Old Testament because they were enabled by God to SEE into the normally UNSEEN realm. God makes his angels **become visible** on certain redemptive or revelatory occasions, but the rest of the time they remain invisible even to His people, except to SEERS like Moses and the prophets. It is this relationship between the SEEN and UNSEEN realms that is so important to understand. It enables us to easily explain how all these events promised by Jesus and expected by the first century saints were actually fulfilled in an experiential way without the pagan world around them seeing it, experiencing it, or documenting it. This is exactly what atheists, critics, and futurists have challenged us to explain.

A good grasp of Biblical Cosmology and the Expectations of the first century church paves the way for us to understand and explain **HOW** Christ returned, and resurrected the dead saints (in the UNSEEN realm), and changed the living saints (into the UNSEEN realm), and snatched them up together as one group to be with Him in the **UNSEEN** realm above.

Since cosmology is something that very few Bible teachers ever deal with, chances are good that it is new material for the reader. Some of my Garrettsville seminar lessons dealt with cosmology, and provide additional information about it. Those lessons are available in both video and audio format on our website store (http://preterist.org/store).

Cosmology of Christ's Return


"In the beginning...**HEAVENS** and the **EARTH"** (Gen. 1:1) seen & unseen
Notice the plural "heavens" and no underworld yet (Adam had not sinned)
Heavens, Earth, Under the Earth – Ex. 20:4; Phil. 2:10; Rev. 5:3; 5:13
This cosmological language is found in both Old & New Testaments
7. Highest Heaven (God and Christ) Psa. 68:33; Heb. 7:26
6.
5.
4.
3. Third Heaven – Paradise (2 Cor. 12:2-4) Enoch says Paradise is in third heaven
2.
1.
HEAVENS (unseen)
Col. 1:16 -- Heavens (invisible)
Earth (visible)
Christ descended from heaven into the air to meet the resurrected dead and the changed living saints. He brought the New Jerusalem down with Him.
AIR or Mid-Heaven (seen and unseen)
Satan - "Prince of the Power of the Air" (Eph. 2:2)
At the Parousia, Satan and demons sent to Gehenna
When Jesus Ascended He took Paradise to Third Heaven (Eph. 4:8-9) Passed thru heavens (Heb. 4:14)
EARTH (seen)
Tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4)
Lake of Fire (Gehenna) Luke 12:5
The Abyss (Deep), Pit (Ezek. 31:15 in LXX; Lk. 8:31; Rev. 9:1-2; 20:3)
Abraham's Bosom (Lk. 16:19-31)
Paradise (Lk. 23:43)
Jesus' descent (1 Pet. 3:18; 4:6; and Acts 2:27, 31)
Souls held captive until Resur.
Resurrection of the Dead out of Hades and caught up with living saints to meet Christ
Under the Earth (unseen)
Sheol (Hebrew: underworld) - Hades (Greek: unseen)

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Matthew 24 Fulfillment Documented

INTRODUCTION

A. To make any significant progress in interpreting Biblical prophecy, we are always forced to ask (and answer) two very critical questions:
   1. What does the Bible actually teach about the **TIME** of fulfillment?
   2. And what does it teach about the **NATURE** of fulfillment?

B. Here we will focus on the NATURE question, in relation to the Second Coming (or Parousia).

C. In dealing with the NATURE issue, we will look not only at what Scripture says about it, but more especially at external **HISTORY**.

D. As Preterists, we put complete confidence in what Scripture says about the TIME of Christ's return.

E. We **KNOW** the Second Coming occurred in AD 70, not because uninspired history RECORDED it, but because inspired Scripture PREDICTED it. And inspired Scripture cannot be broken.

F. We do not need history to prove that Christ returned in AD 70 at the very **TIME** and in the very **MANNER** He predicted. All we need is Scripture.

G. So if Scripture clearly teaches that Christ would return in that first century generation, then it MUST HAVE HAPPENED, regardless of any historical evidence to the contrary.

H. The futurist may stack all the creeds and historical evidence in the world against it, but Scripture still stands, and it stands on the preterist side. If there ever seems to be a conflict between history and Scripture, we must remember that the fault never lies with Scripture, but rather with history itself, or our perception of history, or our misunderstanding of what Scripture actually teaches. It is true that history, rightly understood, always lines up with correctly interpreted Scripture. History can never trump Scripture. Scripture always wins the contest.

I. So why are we using historical evidence here, if it cannot "prove" or "disprove" anything ultimately?

J. History can neither validate nor refute Scripture, nor does it have any absolute authority behind it like Scripture does, but it still has value for the believer and for the Bible interpreter.

K. Historical evidence, properly used, can serve at least two useful purposes:
   1. It encourages us by documenting the fulfillment of what we KNOW has occurred – it adds concrete knowledge and courage of conviction to our abstract faith. It supports and reinforces our belief that these things did occur at the very **TIME** Scripture said they would.
   2. And it provides a much deeper and richer understanding of what the prophecy was actually predicting when we see the **MANNER** in which it was fulfilled in history. So the historical and visible fulfillment helps us understand the NATURE of fulfillment, as well as solidifies our belief in the TIME of fulfillment.

L. In keeping with this second purpose especially, I like what Dr. Charles Hill said in his chapter in Mathison's book about the value of history: [WSTTB, pp. 64-65, boldfaced emphasis is mine, EES]

> ...the Bible was not given in a vacuum; it is not devoid of a historical context. Therefore, the Bible ought to make sense *within* its historical environment, and (because it is true) it ought to make sense *of* its historical environment. It is not an abandonment of the divine authority of Scripture to inquire into this environment – just the opposite! Those who seek to submit to the Scriptures as their only rule of faith and practice ought to use every instrument at their disposal in order to **understand the Scriptures better**. One of those instruments is the environment of ideas into which the gospel came; another is the environment of ideas that were inevitably formed and transformed by the gospel.

M. So we can agree that history has some value for helping us understand Scripture better, and for encouraging us by documenting the fulfillment of Scripture.

N. But this DOES NOT mean we are bound to accept just any and every tidbit of historical documentation that surfaces.

O. There is a scriptural principle first introduced by Moses, and reinforced by Jesus and the Apostles, which defines exactly what kind of historical evidence is useful. It is only that which is "at the mouth of two or more reliable eyewitnesses." Notice that Moses and Jesus and the Apostles did not require "inspired" eyewitnesses, but rather simply a multiple number of reliable eyewitnesses.

P. But even with multiple reliable eyewitnesses, uninspired historical testimony can NEVER overturn inspired Scripture. It can only support Scripture and help elucidate Scripture.
Q. So we will only be using the most historically-reliable information available, and only for the purpose of encouraging us in our belief that these things DID occur at the **TIME** they were supposed to, and enlightening us with a clearer understanding of the **NATURE** of their fulfillment.
R. And the best way to do that is to tie it directly to the Biblical prophecies. We will deal with a number of different Biblical texts, but the focus here will be on the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and its parallels (Mark 13, Luke 17 and Luke 21).
S. A futurist like Tommy Ice might challenge us to prove that every single event predicted in the Olivet Discourse actually occurred by the time Jerusalem fell in AD 70. It would be a delight to take him up on that challenge, as well as issue the challenge for him to abandon his Pretrib Premillennialism if we CAN show that all those events did INDEED occur in the first century generation.
T. We need to point out that Thomas Ice does not believe a single event mentioned in Matthew 24 has occurred yet. He believes every one of those things in Matt. 24 are still future. He knows that if he admits any of the events in Matthew 24 were fulfilled in the first century, his goose is cooked, since it uses the phrase "all these things" repeatedly. So to be consistent, he HAS to push "**ALL THESE THINGS**" two thousand years into the future, including the dismantling of the temple spoken of in Matt. 24:2. But as we shall see, "audience relevance" does not allow that interpretative option.
U. So, let's take a look at Matthew 24 in the context of Jewish, Roman, and Christian history in the first century to see if we can document the fulfillment of "ALL THESE THINGS" in the first century before AD 70.

I. Notice Matt. 24:1-3

Matt. 24:1 Jesus came out from **THE TEMPLE** and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the **TEMPLE BUILDINGS** to Him.
Matt. 24:2 And He said to them, “Do you not see **ALL THESE THINGS**? Truly I say to you, not one stone **HERE** will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”
Matt. 24:3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, **WHEN** will **THESE THINGS** happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

Which TEMPLE were Jesus and his disciples talking about? It was THAT temple in the first century, which was dismantled stone by stone at AD 70. Jesus was NOT talking about some rebuilt temple 2000 years into the future. Yet, in order for Tommy Ice's "all or nothing" interpretation to have any credibility, he would have to take the position that the temple and destruction mentioned here is another temple that will be built and destroyed again 2000 years or more in the future. Notice that the disciples were asking "**WHEN**" that first century temple would be dismantled stone by stone. They were NOT asking about the destruction of another rebuilt temple way off into the future. They wanted to know "**WHEN**" that first century temple which Jesus was pointing to, and which they were gazing at, would be destroyed. So unless we want to accuse Jesus of playing games with them in his answer, we have to assume that He answers their "**WHEN**" question in the following verses. "**WHEN**" does Jesus say "**ALL THESE THINGS**" (including the dismantling of that temple) would occur?

The answer is in Matt. 24:34 – "in this generation." But Tommy Ice says that this verse is speaking of another generation two thousand or more years off into the future. This would mean that Jesus is giving an answer to a question that the disciples were NOT asking. They asked about the first century temple and "WHEN" it would be dismantled. But Tommy says Jesus doesn't deal with that temple's destruction in his answer. This basically puts Jesus into the position of playing games with the disciples. Tommy has painted himself into a corner with that interpretation.

"But wait, there's more!" Tommy is not through with his hermeneutical tricks yet. He has another inconsistency in his interpretation of Jesus' answer to the "WHEN" question. Compare Matt. 23:36 to 24:34. Both verses use this same phrase "this generation." Ice admits that Matt. 23:36 is speaking of that first century generation, but then claims that Matt. 24:34 is speaking of a distant future generation. This forces the conclusion that another temple has to be built so that it can be dismantled again stone by stone (see Matt. 24:1-3) – not very comforting to modern Jews. I wonder what they think of Tommy's idea of building the temple again just so it can be destroyed again! I suspect they are not real

warm and fuzzy over that idea! The Premils are helping the Jews raise huge amounts of money to rebuild it, in hopes that it will hasten the fulfillment of its destruction and get them to the rapture sooner! I suspect the thinkers among the Jews have "**mixed emotions**" about all that monetary help the Premils are offering to rebuild the temple. You know what "mixed emotions" are? It is like watching your worst enemy drive over the cliff in your brand new Mercedes. "Mixed emotions."

But let's compare Matt. 23:36 with Matt. 24:34 to see if there is any biblical validity to Ice's view.

Matthew 23:33-39

Matt. 23:33 "**YOU** [plural] serpents, you brood of vipers, how will **YOU** [plural] escape the sentence of Gehenna?
Matt. 23:34 "Therefore, behold, I am sending **YOU** [plural] prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them **YOU** [plural] will kill and crucify, and some of them **YOU** [plural] will scourge in **YOUR** [plural] synagogues, and persecute from city to city,
Matt. 23:35 so that upon **YOU** [plural] may fall *the guilt of* all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom **YOU** [plural] murdered between the temple and the altar.

Matt. 23:36 "**Truly I say** [Gr. AMEN lego humin] **to YOU** [plural], **all these things** [Gr. tauta panta] will come upon **this generation** [Gr. ten genean tauten – acc. case, object of prep.].

Matt. 23:37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and **YOU** [plural] were unwilling.
Matt. 23:38 "Behold, **YOUR** [plural] house is being left to **YOU** [plural] desolate!
Matt. 23:39 "For I say to **YOU** [plural], from now on **YOU** [plural] will not see Me until **YOU** [plural] say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!'"

Matthew 24:32-36

Matt. 24:32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, **YOU** [plural] know that Summer is near;
Matt. 24:33 so, **YOU** [plural] too, when **YOU** [plural] see **all these things** [Gr. panta tauta] , recognize that He is near, *right* at the door.

Matt. 24:34 "**Truly I say** [Gr. amen lego humin] **to YOU** [plural], **this generation** [Gr. he genea aute – nom. case, subject] will not pass away until **all these things** [Gr. panta tauta] take place**.**

Matt. 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.
Matt. 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Do you see the problem with Ice's approach? The first century "audience relevance" is clear. Jesus is speaking in both texts to his contemporaries, people who were alive in that first century generation. Ice agrees with the first century application of Matt. 23:36, but denies it in Matt. 24:34. But look closely at the verse right before Matt. 24:34.

[Matt. 24:33] Jesus says that those very folks who were listening to him would **SEE** "**all these things**" **occur**. The "all these things" [Gr. panta tauta] is exactly the same in both verses (vv. 33 and 34). And remember this is Jesus' answer to the "**WHEN**" question of the disciples back in verse 3 where they asked "**WHEN** will **THESE THINGS** happen." The "these things" that the disciples asked about included the dismantling of that first century temple at which they were gazing, not some future rebuilt version of it.

The obvious conclusion is that "this generation" in Matt. 24:34 was the generation of people who would be alive when that particular temple that they were looking at would be destroyed. We know that temple was destroyed in AD 70. This forces the conclusion that the "generation" Jesus is talking about

in Matt. 24:34 was his own contemporary generation. That is clearly the audience to whom he addressed these remarks. They would SEE "all these things" occur in their generation. Jesus was not speaking ambiguously to (or about) some other generation two thousand years in the future. It would have had no relevance to the question of his disciples about the destruction of the temple they were looking at.

Well, did "that generation" SEE "all these things" occur within their lifetime? This is where historical documentation from the first century will be very useful. And I just happen to have a little bit of it below. Let's look at it.

Note that each of the numbered events listed in the following chart has a corresponding numbered entry in the pages following the chart where the full text of some of the best and most representative of the quotes from these historians is printed out.

	PREDICTED EVENT	SCRIPT. REF.	FULFILLMENT
1	"**not one stone** left upon another"	Matt. 24:2	*War* 7.1-3 (7.1.1); *War* 7.376 (7.8.7); *War* 7.115 (7.5.2); *War* 7.29-31 (7.2.1) & Footnote; Adam Clarke; Barnes Notes; cf. *War* 6:228 (6.4.1); 6.232 (6.4.2); 6.264-5 (6.4.7.); 6.316-7 (6.6.1); and 6.413 (6.9.1)
2	"**sign** of your **coming** and the **end of the age**"	Matt. 24:3	*War* 6.250 (6.4.5) -- Revolution of Ages (Gk. *chronon periodois* – revolvings or rotations of the times, or the changing of the ages by the end of one age and the beginning of another); *War* 6.288-296 (6.5.3); *War* 4.286-287 (4.4.5); Tacitus *Hist* 5.13; Yosippon ch. 87
3	"**many false Messiahs**... showing great signs and wonders to mislead the elect" (Theudas, Judas of Galilee, the Egyptian, Menahem, *Eleazar b. Ananias*, Simon b. Giora, John of Gischala, Eleazar b. Yair, Zealots, Sicarii, Bandits, Robbers, deceivers, et al)	Matt. 24:5, 24	*War* 2.433-434 (2.17.8); 2.258-265 (2.13.4-5); 2.652-654 (2.22.2); 4.503-510 (4.9.3-4); *Antiq* 20.97-102 (20.5.1-2); 20.167-172 (20.8.6); 20:188 (20.8.10); cf. **Acts 5:36-37** (Theudas and Judas the Galilean); [cf. *Antiq* 17.271 (17.10.5) and footnote, *War* 2.56 (2.4.1); 2.118 (2.8.1)], **Euseb. 2.11.2-3** (Theudas); **Acts 21:38** (the Egyptian); **Euseb. 2.21.1-3** (the Egyptian); ***Antiq* 18.4,9,23** (18.1.1-6), [cf. Eleazar ben Yair at Masada – *War* 7.252-254 (7.8.1)]
4	"**wars and rumors of wars**" *(inside Palestine)* Caligula tried to put altar in the Temple in AD 39; Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in AD 49; Zealots were always trying to push for revolt	Matt. 24:6;	*War* Preface (1.4); 2.184ff (2.10.1); *War* 2.264-265 (2.13.6); *Antiq* 20.177 (20.8.7); *Antiq* 20.184 (20.8.9); *Antiq* 18.6-8 (18.1.1); Euseb. 2.5.4—2.6.8; Acts 18:2

5	"nations rise against other nations" *(outside Palestine)* (Jews asked their relatives beyond the Euphrates to support their revolt)	Matt. 24:7	*War* 7.79 (7.4.2); *War* Preface 1:4-5 (0.2)
6	"famines" – starvation during the siege was so bad that one woman, Mary the daughter of Eleazar from the village of Bethezub, killed and ate her infant son (cannibalism during siege).	Matt. 24:7	**Acts 11:28** (during reign of Claudius AD 44-48); ***Antiq* 20.101** (20.5.2); ***War* 6.421** (6.9.3); **6.197-208** (6.3.3-4) (cannibalism); ***Antiq* 18.8** (18.1.1) (during siege); **cf. Euseb. 2.8.1**;
7	"great **earthquakes**" See the list of all these in my First Century Events book.	Matt. 24:7, Lk. 21:11	J. Marcellus Kik (*An Eschatology of Victory*, p. 93); Barnes Notes on Matt. 24:7; Clarke's Com.; Fourfold Gospel; ***War* 4.286-287** (4.4.5) (during war)
8	"**plagues**"	Lk. 21:11	***War* 6.421** (6.9.3); plagues in Jerusalem during siege. See **Barnes Notes**; and **Fourfold Gospel** (Plague in Rome in AD 60)
9	"**terrors and great signs** from heaven" – "on the earth is distress of nations with perplexity" – "men **fainting from fear** and expectation of things coming"	Lk. 21:11, 25-26	*War* 2.649-650 (2.22.1); *War* 6.288-300 (6.5.3); Tacitus Hist. 5.13; *War* 4.286-287 (4.4.5); Yosippon ch. 87
10	"deliver you to **tribulation**" ...to the Sanhedrin... prisons... flogged in the synagogues... stand before governors and kings as a testimony" – "**arrest you** and hand you over" – "persecute you"	Matt. 24:9, Mk. 13:9-11, Lk. 21:12	The whole book of Acts, Paul's epistles, plus James, Peter, Jude, and John's epistles mention this persecution. John in Revelation says he was arrested during the tribulation.
11	"**kill you**" Acts 7:54-60 (Stephen killed); Acts 12:1-2 (James brother of John was killed in AD 44);	Matt. 24:9	Euseb. 2.8.2; *Antiq* 20.200 (20.9.1); Euseb. 2.23.1-4, 10-18 (James brother of Jesus killed in AD 62); both Paul and Peter and John killed: 2 Tim. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:14-15
12	"**hated** by all nations"	Matt. 24:9	Acts 19 especially (Ephesus) Eusebius records this also
13	"many will **fall away**"	Matt. 24:10	2 Thess. 2:3 reminds them of the apostasy that was about to occur; Gal 5:1-4; 2 Tim 1:15; 4:10; Rev. 2:2-10 and 3:10; 2 Pet. 2:15; 2 Thess. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 3:12; 12:3; 1 Tim. 1:19; Jude 4-23; 1 Jn. 2:18-24
14	"**betray one another**" – brothers, fathers, children will betray their brothers, parents, children, relatives and friends and have them put to death"	Matt. 24:10, Mk. 13:12, Lk. 21:16	2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4; Acts 23:16; *Antiq* 18.8 (18.1.1); *War* 2.466 (2.18.3); Euseb. 2.25.2 cf. *War* 4.310-311 (4.5.1)
15	"**hate one another**"	Matt. 24:10	2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4; Acts 20:29-30; Lk 6:22; 1 Jn. 2:9-11; 3:13-15; 4:20; *War* 7.262 (7.8.1); *Antiq* 18.7-8
16	"many **false prophets**... showing great signs and wonders to mislead the elect"	Matt. 24:11, 24	cf. Acts 8:9-11; 13:6-8; 21:38; *War* 6.285-288 (6.5.2-3); *War* 2.258-262 (2.13.4-5); *Antiq* 20.167-170 (20.8.6); Euseb. 2.21.1; 3.8.1

17	"**lawlessness** is increased"	Matt. 24:12	Acts 23:1-3; *Antiq* 20:200-203 (20.9.1); *War* 7.253-273 (7.8.1); 2:409-417 (2.17.2-4); 4.556-563 (4.9.10); 4.184 (4.3.10); Josephus says the Zealots kept laws only selectively (if at all). *War* 2:264-265 (2.13.6) - The Zealots and bandits lawlessly plundered the Judean countryside. cf. *War* 2:272 (2.14.1) and *Antiq* 20.197ff (20.9.1-5). Albinus and Florus both encouraged this plundering - *War* 2.277 (2:14.2) and *Antiq* 20.252-257 (20.11.1).
18	"most people's love will grow cold"	Matt. 24:12	Seven cities in Revelation had these characteristics already by the time it was written in AD 62
19	"the one who **endures to the end** shall be **saved**" Those who lived until the Parousia were saved from the wrath poured out on the Jews, and taken to be with Christ in the unseen spiritual realm	Matt. 24:13; Matt 10:22; Mark 13:13	Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Cor. 15:52-53; Php. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Thess. 5:9-10; 2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Tim. 2:10; John 14:3; Matt. 24:31; 2 Thess. 2:1; Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12
20	"**gospel** preached in **the whole world**... to **all the nations**... then the **end** [of the age] will come" **"in the whole world"** – see Lk. 2:1; Acts 11:28; 19:27; Rev. 3:10; 12:9; and 16:14. cf. *Antiq* 15:387 (15.11.1) **"to all the nations"** – see Matt. 28:19; Mk. 13:10; Lk. 21:24; 24:47; Acts 10:35; Rom 1:5; and Rom 16:26; cf. Rom 1:8; 10:18; and Col 1:6, 23.	Matt. 24:14	**Euseb. 2.3.1 and 3.8.11; 1 Clement 5:7;** cf. *War* 6.442 (6.10.1) "all the habitable earth"; *Antiq* 14:110 (14.7.2); *War* 2:362-363 (2.16.4); *War* 4:262 (4.4.3); *War* 4.324 (4.5.2); *War* 5:17 (5.1.3);
21	"**abomination of desolation**... standing in the Holy Place" – "standing where it should not be" – "**Jerusalem surrounded** by armies" **Florus** brought Roman armies into Jerusalem to seize all the Temple gold (Apr 66) cf. *War* 2:210 (2.11.3) the Romans considered it abominable when blood of their countrymen was shed in their pagan temples. Josephus tells how the blood of priests and common people was shed inside the Temple. [*War* 5.11ff (5.1.3)]	Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14 Lk. 21:20	*War* 4.201-203 (4.3.12) *War* 4.215 (4.3.13) *War* 4.242 and 4.261-262 (4.4.3); *War* 4.313 and 318 (4.5.1); *War* 4.437 (4.7.6); *War* 4.151 (4.3.7) and 4.388 (4.6.3); *War* 4.558-565 (4.9.10); *War* 5.442-445 (5.10.5); *War* 6:316 (6.6.1); *War* 6.428 (6.9.4); *War* 4.163,171,181-183 (4.3.10); *War* 7.262-270 (7.8.1); *Antiq* 20:166 (20.8.5); *Antiq* 20.165 (20.8.5) – The **Sicarii** murdered in the temple, thus polluting it. *War* 5:17 (5.1.3); *War* 2.455 (2.17.10) – "abomination" used in reference to Priest Eleazar's murder of Roman garrison on Sabbath. Euseb. 3.5.4 and 3.7.4-9

22	"**those in Judea will flee** to the mountains" – acc. to Eusebius, Christians had fled from Judea a few years before the war	Matt 24:16-20	*War* 2.556 (2.20.1); Too late to flee later, see *War* 4.565 (4.9.10); Euseb. 3.5
23	"woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are **nursing babies** in those days... your flight not be in Winter or on a **Sabbath**"	Matt 24:19-20	Euseb. 3.7.1-2 *War* 6.201-213 (6.3.4); Nursing mother slew infant son for food in the famine during the siege; *Antiq* 13.252 (13:8.4) - no travel on Sabbath
24	"**great tribulation**... such as has **never occurred in the past**, nor ever will again in the future" – (Neronic persecution)	Matt. 24:21	*War* Preface 1, 4 (1:1, 1:11-12); *War* 5.442 (5.10.5); *War* 6:429 (6.9.4); Euseb. 2.26; 3.6
25	"**tribulation cut short** for the sake of the elect" Cut short by the outbreak of the war, and the Rapture shortly afterwards.	Matt. 24:22, Mk. 13:20	Eleazar blew the shofar for war, and the rapture happened soon afterwards. *War* 2.531 (2.19.4); *War* 2.556 (2.20.1); *War* 2.539-540 (2.19.6)
26	"days of vengeance.. that all things written will be fulfilled" – "great **distress** and wrath" – "fall by the **sword**... **led captive** into all the nations... Jerusalem **trampled under foot** by Gentiles"	Lk. 21:22-24	*War* 2.650 (2.22.1); *War* 6.193-219 (6.3.3-5); *War* 6.413-435 (6.9.1-4); *War* 6.428-442 (6.9-10); *War* 7.1-3 (7.1.1); Euseb. 3.7.4-9
27	"coming of the Son of Man" will not escape their notice, just like lightning which flashes from east to west	Matt. 24:27	*War* 5.266-274 (5.6.3) plus footnotes, "here comes the son" *War* 6.288-300 (6.5.3); Euseb. 3.8.5; Tac. Hist. 5.13 Yosippon ch. 87
28	"wherever the corpse is, there the **eagles [Roman armies] will gather**"	Matt. 24:28	*War* 6.369 (6.7.2) *War* 3.123 (3.6.2); *War* 6.316-317 (6.6.1)
29	"immediately after the tribulation... sun darkened, moon gives no light, stars fall from the sky" – "signs in sun and moon and stars"	Matt. 24:29, Lk. 21:25	Cities being burned caused smoke to darken the sun and moon. Astrological phenomenon were also seen above. *War* 6.288-300 (6.5.3); Euseb. 3.8.5; Tacitus Hist. 5.13; Yosippon ch. 87
30	"(demonic) powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Satan thrown down - book of Rev.)	Matt. 24:29	*War* 6.288-300 (6.5.3); Euseb. 3.8.5; Tacitus Hist. 5.13
31	"**sign of the Son of Man** will appear in the sky" [SIGNS]	Matt. 24:30	Yosippon ch. 87 *War* 6.288-300 (6.5.3); Euseb. 3.8.5; Tacitus Hist. 5.13
32	"all the tribes of the land will **mourn**"	Matt. 24:30	*War* 2.649 (2.22.1); *War* 2.455 (2.17.10)
33	"**see the Son of Man coming** on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" – "Son of Man will be revealed" [PAROUSIA]	Matt. 24:30, Lk. 17:30, Lk. 21:27	Yosippon ch. 87 *War* 6.288-300 (6.5.3); Euseb. 3.8.5; Tacitus Hist. 5.13
34	"He will **send forth His angels** with a **great trumpet** and they will **gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" [RAPTURE]	Matt. 24:31, Mk. 13:27	*War* 6.288-300 (6.5.3); Euseb. 3.8.5; Tacitus Hist. 5.13 Yosippon ch. 87 This was the rapture.

Text of the Historical Fulfillments Referenced by Numbers Above

From the works of Josephus, Eusebius, Tacitus, Yosippon, and others. Used by permission.

1. **War 7.1** (7.1.1) Now, as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other such work to be done) Caesar gave orders that they should now **demolish the entire city and temple**, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side.
War 7.2 (7.1.1) This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison; as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued;
War 7.3 (7.1.1) but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that **dug it up to the foundation**, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.

War 7:376 (7.8.7) Where is this city that was believed to have God himself inhabiting therein? It is now **demolished to the very foundations**; and hath nothing but that monument of it preserved, I mean the camp of those that have destroyed it, which still dwells upon its ruins;

War 7.115 (7.5.2) a great deal of which **the Romans dug up**; but the greatest part was discovered by those who were captives, and so they carried it away, I mean **the gold and the silver**, and the rest of that most precious furniture which the Jews had, and which the owners had treasured up underground, against the uncertain fortunes of war.

War 7:29 (7.2.1) And now Simon, thinking he might be able to astonish and delude the Romans, put on a white frock, and buttoned upon him a purple cloak, and **appeared out of the ground in the place the temple had formerly been**.
War 7:30 (7.2.1) At the first, indeed, those that saw him were greatly astonished, and stood still where they were; but afterward they came near to him, and asked him who he was.
War 7:31 (7.2.1) Now Simon would not tell them, but bade them call for their captain; and when they ran to call him, **Terentius Rufus**, who was left to command the army there, came to Simon, and learned of him the whole truth, and kept him in bonds, and let Caesar know that he was taken.

Whiston Note on War 7:31 (7.2.1) –
This **Terentius Rufus**, as Reland in part observes here, is the same person whom the Talmudists call Turnus Rufus; of whom they relate, that "**he ploughed up Zion as a field**, and made Jerusalem become as heaps, and **the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest**;" which was long before foretold by the prophet **Micah (3:12)**, and quoted from him in the prophecies of **Jeremiah (26:18)**.

Adam Clarke's Comments on Matt. 24:2 – "Maimonides, a Jewish rabbin, in Tractate Taanith, c. 4, says, "That the very **foundations of the temple were digged up**, according to the Roman custom." His words are these: "On that ninth day of the month Ab, fatal for vengeance, the wicked Turnus Rufus, of the children of Edom, **ploughed up the temple**, and the places round about it, that the saying might be fulfilled, Zion shall be ploughed as a field." This Turnus, or rather Terentius Rufus, was left general of the army by Titus, with commission, as the Jews suppose, to destroy the city and the temple, as Josephus observes."

Barnes Notes on Matt. 24:2 – "Maimonides, a Jewish writer, has also recorded that "Terentius Rufus, an officer in the army of Titus, with a ploughshare tore up the foundations of the temple," that the prophecy might be fulfilled, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field," Micah 3:12."

2. **War 6:250** (6.4.5) but, as for that house, God had for certain long ago **doomed it to the fire**; and now **that fatal day was come**, according to the **revolution of ages**; it was the tenth day of the month Lous [Ab], upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon;

War 6.288 (6.5.3**)** Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these **deceivers**, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to **the signs** that were so evident and did so **plainly foretell their future desolation**; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them.
War 6.289 (6.5.3) Thus there was **a star resembling a sword**, which stood over the city, and **a comet**, that continued a whole year.
War 6.290 (6.5.3) Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, **so great a light** shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour.
War 6.291 (6.5.3) This light seemed to be a good **sign** to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to **portend those events** that followed immediately upon it.
War 6.292 (6.5.3) At the same festival also, a heifer [young virgin female calf], as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, **brought forth a lamb** in the midst of the temple.
War 6.293 (6.5.3) Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was **seen to be opened of its own accord** about the sixth hour of the night.
War 6.294 (6.5.3) Now, those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again.
War 6.295 (6.5.3) This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy **prodigy**, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the **security of their holy house was dissolved** of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the **advantage of their enemies**.
War 6.296 (6.5.3) So these publicly declared, that **this signal foreshowed the desolation** that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [Jyar],
War 6.297 (6.5.3) a certain **prodigious and incredible phenomenon** appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it,
War 6.298 (6.5.3) and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to **deserve such signals**; for, before sunsetting, **chariots and troops of soldiers** in their armor were seen
War 6.299 (6.5.3) **running about among the clouds**, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they **felt a quaking**, and **heard a great noise**,
War 6.300 (6.5.3) and after that they heard a **sound as of a great multitude**, saying, "Let us remove hence."

War 4:286 (4.4.5) for there broke out a **prodigious** storm in the night [AD 68 in Jerusalem], with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake.
War 4:287 (4.4.5) These things were a **manifest indication** that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these **wonders foreshowed** some grand calamities that were coming.

Tacitus, Histories, Bk 5, Sec. 13

Prodigies had occurred, which this nation, prone to superstition, but hating all religious rites, did not deem it lawful to expiate by offering and sacrifice. There had been seen **hosts joining battle in the skies**, the fiery gleam of arms, **the temple illuminated by a sudden radiance from the clouds**. **The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open, and a voice of more than mortal tone was heard to cry that the Gods were departing**. At the same instant there was a **mighty stir as of departure**.

Sepher *Yosippon* (A Mediaeval History of Ancient Israel)

Translated from the Hebrew by Steven B. Bowman.
Excerpts from Chapter 87 "Burning of the Temple"

For one year before Vespasian came, a single great star shining like unsheathed swords was seen over the Temple. And in those days when **the sign** was seen it was the holiday of Passover and during that entire night the **Temple was lit up and illuminated like the light of day**, and thus it was **all seven days of the Passover**. All the sages of Jerusalem knew that it was a **malevolent sign**, but the rest of the ignorant people said that it was a benevolent sign.
*…Now it happened after this that there was **seen from above over the Holy of Holies for the whole night the outline of a man's face**, the like of whose beauty had never been seen in all the land, and his appearance was quite awesome.*
Moreover, in those days were seen **chariots of fire and horsemen, a great force flying across the sky near to the ground coming against Jerusalem and all the land of Judah, all of them horses of fire and riders of fire**. When the holiday of Shavuot came in those days, **during the night the priests heard within the Temple something like the sound of men going and the sound of men marching in a multitude going into the Temple, and a terrible and mighty voice was heard speaking: "Let's go and leave this House**.

3. **War 2:433** (2.17.8) In the meantime one **Menahem**, the son of Judas, that was called the Galilean (who was a very cunning sophister, and had formerly reproached the Jews under Cyrenius, that after God they were subject to the Romans) took some of the men of note with him, and retired to Masada,
War 2:434 (2.17.8) where he broke open king Herod's armory, and gave arms not only to his own people, but to other robbers also. These he made use of for a guard, and **returned in the state of a king to Jerusalem**; he became the **leader of the sedition**, and gave orders for continuing the siege;

War 2.258 (2.13.4) There was also another body of **wicked men** gotten together, not so impure in their actions, but more wicked in their intentions, who laid waste the happy state of the city no less than did these murderers.
War 2.259 (2.13.4) These were such men as **deceived and deluded the people under pretense of divine inspiration**, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government, and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and **went before them into the wilderness**, as **pretending that God would there show them the signals of liberty**;
War 2.260 (2.13.4) but Felix thought this procedure was to be the beginning of a revolt; so he sent some horsemen and footmen, both armed, who destroyed a great number of them.
War 2.261 (2.13.5) But there was an **Egyptian false prophet** that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and **pretended to be a prophet** also, and got together thirty thousand men that were **deluded by him**;
War 2.262 (2.13.5) these he led round about **from the wilderness** to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he **intended to domineer over them** by the assistance of those guards of his that were to break into the city with him,
War 2.263 (2.13.5) but Felix prevented his attempt, and met him with his Roman soldiers, while all the people assisted him in his attack upon them, insomuch that, when it came to a battle, **the Egyptian** ran away, with a few others, while the greatest part of those that were with him were either destroyed or taken alive; but the rest of the multitude were dispersed every one to their own homes and there concealed themselves.
War 2:264 (2.13.6) Now, when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of **deceivers and robbers** got together, and **persuaded the Jews to revolt**, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations;
War 2:265 (2.13.6) for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the

villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. **And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war**.

War 2:652 (2.22.2) But as for the Acrabbene toparchy, **Simon, the son of Gioras**, got a great number of **those that were fond of innovations** together, and betook himself to **ravage the country**; nor did he only harass the rich men's houses, but tormented their bodies, and appeared openly and beforehand to affect **tyranny in his government**.
War 2:653 (2.22.2) And when and **army was sent against him by Ananus**, and the other rulers, he and his band **retired to the robbers that were at Masada**, and staid there, and **plundered the country of Idumea** with them, till both Ananus and his other adversaries were slain;
War 2:654 (2.22.2) and until the rulers of that country were so afflicted with the multitude of those that were slain, and with the continual ravage of what they had, that the **raised an army**, and **put garrisons into the villages**, to secure them from those insults. And in this state were the affairs of Judea at that time.

War 4.503 (4.9.3) And now there arose another war at Jerusalem. There was **a son of Giora, one Simon**, by birth of Gerasa, a young man, not so cunning indeed as **John [of Gischala],** who had already seized upon the city,
War 4.504 (4.9.3) but superior in strength of body and courage; on which account, when he had been driven away from that Acrabattene toparchy, which he once had, by Ananus the high priest, he came to those robbers who had seized upon Masada.
War 4.505 (4.9.3) At first they suspected him, and only permitted him to come with the women he brought with him into the lower part of the fortress, while they dwelt in the upper part of it themselves.
War 4.506 (4.9.3) However, his manner so well agreed with theirs, and he seemed so trusty a man, that he went out with them, and ravaged and destroyed the country with them about Masada;
War 4.507 (4.9.3) yet when he persuaded them to undertake greater things, he could not prevail with them so to do; for as they were accustomed to dwell in that citadel, they were afraid of going far from that which was their hiding-place;
War 4.508 (4.9.3) but he, affecting to tyrannize, and being **fond of greatness**, when he had heard of the death of Ananus, left them, and went into the mountainous part of the country. So **he proclaimed liberty to those in slavery, and a reward to those already free, and got together a set of wicked men from all quarters**.
War 4.509 (4.9.4) And as he had now a **strong body of men about him**, he overran the villages that lay in the mountainous country, and when there were still more and more that came to him, he ventured to go down into the lower parts of the country,
War 4.510 (4.9.4) and since he was now become formidable to the cities, many of the **men of power were corrupted by him**; so that his army was no longer composed of slaves and robbers, but a great many of the populace were **obedient to him as their king**.

***Antiq.* 20:97** (20.5.1) Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was **Theudas**, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; **for he told them he was a prophet**, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it;
***Antiq.* 20:98** (20.5.1) and many were deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to make any advantage of his wild attempt, but sent a troop of horsemen out against them; who, falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them and took many of them alive. They also took **Theudas** alive, and cut off his head, and carried it to Jerusalem.
***Antiq.* 20:99** (20.5.1) This was what befell the Jews in the time of Cuspius Fadus's government [AD 44-46].
***Antiq.* 20:100** (20.5.2) Then came Tiberius Alexander as successor to Fadus [AD 46-48]; he was the son of Alexander the alabarch of Alexandria; which Alexander was a principal person among all his contemporaries, both for his family and wealth: he was also more eminent for his piety than this his son Alexander, for he did not continue in the religion of his country.
***Antiq.* 20:101** (20.5.2) Under these procurators **that great famine happened in Judea [AD 46]**, in which queen Helena bought corn in Egypt at a great expense, and distributed it to those that were in want, as I have related already;

***Antiq.* 20:102** (20.5.2) and besides this, **the sons of Judas of Galilee were now slain**; I mean of that **Judas who caused the people to revolt**, when Cyrenius came to take an account of the estates of the Jews [AD 6], as we have shown in a foregoing book. The names of those sons were **James and Simon**, whom Alexander commanded to be **crucified**;

***Antiq.* 20:167** (20.8.6) These works, that were done by the robbers, filled the city with all sorts of impiety. And now these **impostors and deceivers** persuaded the multitude to **follow them into the wilderness**,
***Antiq.* 20:168** (20.8.6) and pretended that they would **exhibit manifest wonders and signs**, that should be performed by the providence of God. And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishments of their folly; for Felix brought them back, and then punished them.
***Antiq.* 20:169** (20.8.6) Moreover, there **came out of Egypt** about this time to Jerusalem, one that said **he was a prophet**, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs.
***Antiq.* 20:170** (20.8.6) He said farther, that he would show them from hence, how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down.
***Antiq.* 20:171** (20.8.6) Now when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen, from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive.
***Antiq.* 20:172** (20.8.6) But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight, but did not appear any more. And again the robbers stirred up the people to make war with the Romans, and said they ought not to obey them at all; and when any persons would not comply with them, they set fire to their villages, and plundered them.

4. War Preface 1:4 (20.11.3) Now at the time when this great concussion of affairs happened, the affairs of the Romans themselves were in **great disorder**. Those Jews also, who were for innovations, then arose when **the times were disturbed**; they were also in a flourishing condition for strength and riches, insomuch that the affairs of the east were then exceeding tumultuous, while some hoped for gain, and others were afraid of loss in such troubles;

War 2:184 (2.10.1) Now Caius Caesar [Caligula] did so grossly abuse the fortune he had arrived at, as to take himself to be a god, and to desire to be so called also, and to cut off those of the greatest nobility out of his country. He also extended his impiety as far as the Jews.
War 2:185 (2.10.1) Accordingly, he sent Petronius with an army to Jerusalem, **to place his statues in the temple**, and commanded him that, in case the Jews would not admit of them, he should slay those that opposed it, and carry all the rest of the nation into captivity;
War 2:186 (2.10.1) but God concerned himself with these his commands. However, Petronius marched out of Antioch into Judea, with three legions, and many Syrian auxiliaries.
War 2:187 (2.10.1) Now as to the Jews, some of them could not believe the stories that spoke of a war; but those that did believe them were in the utmost distress how to defend themselves, and the terror diffused itself presently through them all, for the army was already come to Ptolemais.

War 2:264 ¶ (2.13.6) Now, when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of **deceivers** and **robbers** got together, and **persuaded the Jews to revolt**, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations;
War 2:265 (2.13.6) for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. **And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war.**

5. War 7:79 (7.4.2) for when they saw the Roman government in a **great internal disorder**, by the continual changes of its rulers, and understood that every part of the habitable earth under them was

in an **unsettled and tottering condition**, they thought this was the best opportunity that could afford itself for themselves to make a sedition, when the **state of the Romans was so ill**.

War Preface 1:4 (0.2) Now at the time when this great concussion of affairs happened, the affairs of the Romans themselves were in **great disorder**. Those Jews also, who were for innovations, then arose when **the times were disturbed**; they were also in a flourishing condition for strength and riches, insomuch that the affairs of the east were then exceeding tumultuous, while some hoped for gain, and others were afraid of loss in such troubles;
War Preface 1:5 (0.2) for the Jews hoped that **all of their nation which were beyond Euphrates** would have raised an insurrection together with them. The **Gauls** also, in the neighborhood of the Romans, were in motion, and the **Celtae** were not quiet; but **all was in disorder** after the death of Nero. And the opportunity now offered induced many to aim at the royal power; and the soldiery affected change, out of the hopes of getting money.

6. Acts 11:28; famine during reign of Claudius (AD 44-48):

***Antiq.* 20:101** (20.5.2) Under these procurators **that great famine** happened in Judea, in which queen Helena bought corn in Egypt at a great expense, and distributed it to those that were in want, as I have related already;

War 6:421 (6.9.3) the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a **famine**, as destroyed them more suddenly.

War 6:197 (6.3.3) Moreover, their hunger was so intolerable, that it obliged them to chew everything, while they gathered such things as the most sordid animals would not touch, and endured to eat them; nor did they at length abstain from **girdles** and **shoes**; and the very **leather which belonged to their shields** they pulled off and gnawed:
War 6:198 (6.3.3) the very **wisps of old hay** became food to some; and some gathered up **fibers**, and sold a very small weight of them for four Attic [drachmae].
War 6:199 (6.3.3) But why do I describe the shameless impudence that the famine brought on men in their eating inanimate things, while I am going to relate a matter of fact, the like to which no history relates, either among the Greeks or Barbarians! It is horrible to speak of it, and incredible when heard.
War 6:200 (6.3.3) I had indeed willingly omitted this calamity of ours, that I might not seem to deliver what is so portentous to posterity, but that **I have innumerable witnesses** to it in my own age; and, besides, my country would have had little reason to thank me for suppressing the miseries that she underwent at this time.
War 6:201 (6.3.4) There was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was **Mary**; her father was Eleazar, of the village Bethezub, which signifies the House of Hyssop. She was eminent for her family and her wealth, and had **fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude, and was with them besieged** therein at this time.
War 6:202 (6.3.4) The other effects of this woman had been already seized upon; such I mean as she had brought with her out of Perea, and removed to the city. What she had treasured up besides, as also what food she had contrived to save, had been also carried off by the rapacious guards, who came every day running into her house for that purpose.
War 6:203 (6.3.4) This put the poor woman into a very great passion, and by the frequent reproaches and imprecations she cast at these rapacious villains, she had provoked them to anger against her;
War 6:204 (6.3.4) but none of them, either out of the indignation she had raised against herself, or out of the commiseration of her case, would take away her life; and if she found any food, she perceived her labors were for others, and not for herself; and it was now become impossible for her anyway to find anymore food, while **the famine** pierced through her very bowels and marrow, when also her passion was fired to a degree beyond the famine itself; nor did she consult with anything but with her passion and the necessity she was in. She then attempted a most unnatural thing;

War 6:205 (6.3.4) and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, "O, thou miserable infant! For whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine, and this sedition?
War 6:206 (6.3.4) As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! This famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us: yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other.
War 6:207 (6.3.4) Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews."
War 6:208 (6.3.4) As soon as she had said this she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate the one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed.
War 6:209 (6.3.4) Upon this the seditious came in presently, and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her, that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready. She replied, that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son.
War 6:210 (6.3.4) Hereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them, "This is mine own son; and what hath been done was mine own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself!
War 6:211 (6.3.4) Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half, let the rest be reserved for me also."
War 6:212 (6.3.4) After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at anything as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother. Upon which the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately; and while every body laid his miserable case before their own eyes, they trembled, as if this unheard-of action had been by themselves.
War 6:213 (6.3.4) So those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die; and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not lived long enough either to hear or to see such miseries.

7. **War 4:286** (4.4.5) for there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and **amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth**, that was in an **earthquake**.
War 4:287 (4.4.5) These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders **foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming**.

J. Marcellus Kik: "And as to earthquakes, many are mentioned by the writers during a period just previous to 70 A.D. there were earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colossae, Campania, Rome, and Judea. It is interesting to note that the city of Pompeii was much damaged by an earthquake...Feb. 5, 63 AD" (*An Eschatology of Victory*, p. 93). See also Dr. Lardner, in his *Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion*, first published 1764–'67, also in vol. vi. of his Works, ed. by Kippis, London 1838.

Barnes Notes on Matthew 24:7 – Many of these [earthquakes] are mentioned as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudius, at Rome; and says that, in the reign of Nero, the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, were overthrown; and the celebrated Pompeii was overwhelmed, and almost destroyed by an earthquake, **Annals, 15, 22**. Others are mentioned as occurring at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, and Samos.

Clarke's Commentary on Matthew 24:7 – …earthquakes, there were several in those times to which our Lord refers; particularly one at Crete in the reign of Claudius, one at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos. **See Grotius**. One at Rome, mentioned by **Tacitus**; and one at Laodicea in the reign of Nero, in which the city was overthrown, as were likewise Hierapolis and Colossae. See **Tacit. Annals lib. xii. and lib. xiv**. One at Campania, mentioned by **Seneca [***Ad Lucilium Epist. Morales***]**; and one at Rome, in the reign of Galba, mentioned by **Suetonius** in the life of that emperor. Add to all these, a dreadful one in Judea, mentioned by **Josephus (*War* 4.286)** accompanied by a dreadful tempest,

violent winds, vehement showers, and continual lightnings and thunders; which led many to believe that these things portended some uncommon calamity [AD 68]:

Fourfold Gospel (*Harmony of the Gospels* by McGarvey and Pendleton) comments on Matthew 24:7 – Great natural disturbances would constitute the third sign. That these preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, there is abundant historic evidence. **Alford** enumerates the earthquakes as follows: 1. A great earthquake in Crete, AD 46 or 47. 2. One at Rome when Nero assumed the manly toga, A.D. 51. 3. One at Apamaea in Phrygia, mentioned by **Tacitus**, A.D. 53. 4. One at Laodicea in Phrygia, A.D. 60. 5. One in Campania, A.D. 62 or 63. There were an indefinite number of **famines** referred to by Roman writers, and at least one **pestilence** during which thirty thousand perished in Rome alone. All these signs are mentioned by unbelieving writers such as **Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Philostratus, and Seneca**, who speak of them because of their importance and not with any reference to the prophecy of Christ.

Earthquakes in Crete (AD 47), Rome (AD 51), Apamaea (AD 53), Laodicea (AD 60). Seneca mentioned quakes in Turkey (incl. Smyrna) (in AD 65). [Seneca *Ad Lucilium Epist. Morales*]

8. **War 6:421** (6.9.3) the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them that there came a **pestilential destruction** upon them, and soon afterward such a famine, as destroyed them more suddenly.

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9. (same as #2)

10. Book of Acts and Paul's Epistles document this extreme persecution (the great tribulation). In the book of Revelation, John says the tribulation was already in progress and he was a victim of it by being put in exile on the island of Patmos. Furthermore, the Neronic persecution is mentioned by Tacitus and Suetonius. And the book of Revelation refers to it as the "great tribulation" also. But Josephus, who was in Rome at the time of the great fire (July 64) and afterwards during the persecution, is strangely silent about it.

11. The book of Acts shows Stephen and James (John's brother) being killed by the Jews. Josephus talks about James (the brother of Jesus) being killed by the Jews in AD 62. At the same time James was arrested, Josephus says that some other companions of James there in Jerusalem were arrested. This may have been when John was arrested and sent to exile on the Roman prison island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation in AD 63, and shortly afterwards suffered martyrdom in the Neronic persecution (AD 64). Both Peter and Paul in their final books (2 Peter and 2 Timothy) say that their martyrdom was imminent, which were written right after the Neronic persecution broke out. The great tribulation was underway (AD 62-66).

12. Acts and the epistles of Paul show this extremely hateful treatment of Christians. Eusebius records a lot more of it.

13. Gal. 5:1ff and 2 Thess. 2:1ff show that this apostasy was already happening. The book of Acts shows it, and the books of Hebrews and Revelation both warn against this apostasy that was already happening. The last few NT books to be written are full of warnings about apostasy and exhortations to endure to the End.

14. The book of Acts and other NT epistles show this very kind of betrayal. Apostle Paul was a part of the Jerusalem hierarchy before he became a Christian. All his relatives and friends and associates turned their back on him and tried to kill him, except for his nephew who informed him of a plot on his life.

15. There were even Christians (the Judaizers) who did spiteful things against their fellow Christians. Paul said that his imprisonment had been made much more difficult by the jealousy and bitterness of the Judaizers, and other (false) brethren who had sneaked in to spy out their freedoms in Christ. Paul told the Ephesian elders that from among their own selves false teachers and betrayers would arise. Paul says in 2 Timothy that "all who are in Asia had turned away from him."

16. **War 6:285** (6.5.2) A **false prophet** was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive **miraculous signs** of their deliverance.
War 6:286 (6.5.2) Now, there was then a **great number of false prophets** suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should **wait for deliverance** from God: and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes.
War 6:287 (6.5.2) Now, a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a **seducer** makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such deliverance.
War 6:288 (6.5.3) Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these **deceivers**, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to **the signs that were so evident** and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them.

Antiq. 20:97 (20.5.1) Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was **Theudas**, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them he was a **prophet**, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it;

Antiq. 20:169 (20.8.6) Moreover, there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem, one that said he was a **prophet** [i.e., **the Egyptian**], and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs.

War 2:261 ¶ (2.13.5) But there was an **Egyptian** false **prophet** that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a **prophet** also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him;

17. Josephus says the robbers, Sicarii, Zealots, seditious factions, and even High Priests kept laws only selectively (if at all). Both civil laws and religious laws were trampled underfoot by the Zealots in their attempt to throw off the Roman yoke. Jewish Christians like James had kept every jot and tittle of the Law better than the scribes and Pharisees, but the Zealots did not hesitate to break the law.

War 7:262 (7.8.1) They were the Sicarii who first began these transgressions, and first became barbarous towards those allied to them, and left no words of reproach unsaid, and no works of perdition untried, in order to destroy those whom their contrivances affected.

War 6:408 (6.8.5) a city that had been liable to so many miseries during the siege, that, had it always enjoyed as much happiness from its first foundation, it would certainly have been the envy of the world. Nor did it on any other account so much deserve these sore misfortunes, as by producing such **a generation of men as were the occasions of this its overthrow**.

War 2:409 (2.17.2) At the same time **Eleazar, the son of Ananias** the high priest, a very bold youth, who was at that time governor of the temple, persuaded those that officiated in the divine service to **receive no gift or sacrifice for any foreigner**. And this was **the true beginning of our war** with the

Romans; for they **rejected the sacrifice of Caesar** on this account;
War 2:410 (2.17.2) and when many of the high priests and principal men besought them not to omit the sacrifice which it was **customary** for them to offer for their princes, they would not be prevailed upon. These relied much upon their multitude, for the most flourishing part of the innovators assisted them, but they had the chief regard to Eleazar, the governor of the temple.
War 2:411 ¶ (2.17.3) Hereupon the men of power got together, and conferred with the high priests, as did also the principal of the Pharisees; and thinking all was at stake, and that their calamities were becoming incurable, took counsel what was to be done. Accordingly they determined to try what they could do with the seditious by words, and assembled the people before the brazen gate, which was the gate of the inner temple [court of the priests] which looked towards the sunrising.
War 2:412 (2.17.3) And, in the first place, they showed the great indignation they had at this attempt for a revolt, and for their bringing so great a war upon their country; after which they confuted their pretense as unjustifiable, and told them, that their forefathers had adorned their temple in great part with **donations bestowed on them by foreigners**, and **had always received** what had been presented to them from foreign nations;
War 2:413 (2.17.3) and that they had been **so far from rejecting any person's sacrifice (which would be the highest instance of impiety)**, that they had themselves placed those donations about the temple which were still visible, and had remained there so long a time;
War 2:414 (2.17.3) that they did now irritate the Romans to take up arms against them, and invited them to make war upon them, and brought up **novel rules of strange divine worship**, and determined to run the hazard of having their city **condemned for impiety**, while they would not allow any foreigner but Jews only, either to sacrifice or to worship therein.
War 2:415 (2.17.3) And if **such a law** should ever be introduced in the case of a single person only, he would have indignation at it, as an instance of inhumanity determined against him; while they have **no regard to the Romans or to Caesar**, and **forbade even their oblations** to be received also;
War 2:416 (2.17.3) that however they cannot but fear, lest, by thus rejecting their sacrifices, they shall not be allowed to offer their own; and that this city will lose its principality, unless they grow wiser quickly, and restore the sacrifices as formerly; and indeed amend the injury [they have offered to foreigners] before the report of it comes to the ears of those that have been injured.
War 2:417 ¶ (2.17.4) And as they said these things, they produced those priests that were skillful in **the customs** of their country, who made the report, that all their forefathers had received the sacrifices from foreign nations.—But still **not one of the innovators would hearken to what was said**: nay, those that ministered about the temple would not attend their divine service, but were preparing matters for beginning the war.

18. Seven cities in Revelation already had these characteristics by the time it was written in AD 62-64. And Apostle Paul reminds all of the churches to whom he wrote his epistles not to lose their passion that they had expressed toward Christ at the beginning of their conversion. The corrupting influence of the world took its toll on the churches as they fell under more and more persecution and tribulation.

19. Those who lived and remained (endured) until the Parousia were rescued (raptured) before the wrath was poured out upon the apostate Jews. See all the biblical texts listed on the chart above.

20. See especially these biblical texts: Rom. 1:8; 10:28; 15:18f; 16:26; Col. 1:6, 23. Then compare the various phrases in the biblical text ("in the whole world" and "to all the nations") with the same or similar phrases in Josephus, Eusebius, and Clement below:

[Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 2.3.1] Thus, under the influence of heavenly power, and with the divine co-operation, the doctrine of the Saviour, like the rays of the sun, quickly illumined **the whole world**; and straightway, in accordance with the divine Scriptures, the voice of the inspired evangelists and apostles went forth **through all the earth**, and their words to **the end of the world**.

[Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 3.8.11] But Vespasian did not rule **the whole world**, but only that part of it which was subject to the Romans. With better right could it be applied to Christ; to whom it was said by the Father, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and **the ends of the**

earth for thy possession." At that very time, indeed, the voice of his holy apostles "**went throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world**."

1Clem. 5:5 Because of jealousy and strife Paul showed the way to the prize for patient endurance.
1Clem. 5:6 After he had been seven times in chains, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, and had preached in the east and in the west, he won the genuine glory for his faith,
1Clem. 5:7 having taught righteousness **to the whole world and having reached the farthest limits of the west**. Finally, when he had given his testimony before the rulers, he thus departed from the world and went to the holy place, having become an outstanding example of patient endurance.
1Clem. 6:1 To these men who lived holy lives there was joined a vast multitude of the elect who, having suffered many torments and tortures because of jealousy, set an illustrious example among us.

War 6:442 (6.10.1) yet hath not its great antiquity, nor its vast riches, nor **the diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth**, nor the greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed. And thus ended the siege of Jerusalem.

21. **War 4:201** (4.3.12) As for the dead bodies of the people, their relations carried them out to their own houses; but when any of the zealots were wounded, he went up into the temple, and defiled that sacred floor with his blood, insomuch that one may say it was **their blood alone that polluted our sanctuary**.
War 4:202 (4.3.12) Now in these conflicts the robbers always sallied out of the temple, and were too hard for their enemies; but the populace grew very angry, and became more and more numerous, and reproached those that gave back, and those behind would not afford room to those that were going off, but forced them on again, till at length they made their whole body to turn against their adversaries,
War 4:203 (4.3.12) and the robbers could no longer oppose them, but were forced gradually to **retire into the temple**; when Ananus and his party fell into it at the same time together with them.
Whiston's Note on War 4:203 above – It is worth noting here, that this Ananus, the best of the Jews at this time, and the high priest, who was so very uneasy at the **profanation of the Jewish courts of the temple by the zealots**, did not however scruple the profanation of the "court of the Gentiles;" as in our Savior's days it was very much profaned by the Jews, and made a marketplace, nay, a "den of thieves," without scruple, Matt. 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17. Accordingly Josephus himself, when he speaks of the two inner courts, calls them both hagia, or holy places; but, so far as I remember, never gives that character of the court of the Gentiles. See *War* 5.356 (5.9.2) below:
War 5:356 (5.9.2) Thus did the Romans spend four days in bringing this subsistence money to the several legions; but on the fifth day, when no signs of peace appeared to come from the Jews, Titus divided his legions, and began to raise banks, both at the tower of Antonia and at John's monument. Now his designs were to take the upper city at that monument, and the temple at the tower of Antonia; for **if the temple were not taken it would be dangerous** to keep the city itself. [i.e., implying that the Zealots were occupying the inner courts of the temple – ees]

The city was surrounded back then. This is not a still future event:

War 6:428 (6.9.4) Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in a prison, and the Roman **army encompassed the city** when it was crowded with inhabitants.

***Antiq.* 20:166** (20.8.5) And this seems to me to have been the reason why God, out his hatred to these men's wickedness, rejected our city; and as for the temple, he no longer esteemed it sufficiently pure for him to inhabit therein, but brought the Romans upon us, and threw a fire upon the city to purge it; and brought upon us, our wives, and children, slavery, as desirous to make us wiser by our calamities.

22. **War 2:556** (2.20.1) After this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink; Costobarus, therefore, and Saul, who were brethren, together with Philip, the son of Jacimus, who was the commander of king Agrippa's forces, ran away from the city, and went to Cestius.

23. Nursing mother who slew her infant son for food in the famine of the siege:

War 6:201 (6.3.4) There was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was **Mary**; her father was Eleazar, of the village Bethezub, which signifies the House of Hyssop. She was eminent for her family and her wealth, and had **fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude, and was with them besieged** therein at this time.
War 6:202 (6.3.4) The other effects of this woman had been already seized upon; such I mean as she had brought with her out of Perea, and removed to the city. What she had treasured up besides, as also what food she had contrived to save, had been also carried off by the rapacious guards, who came every day running into her house for that purpose.
War 6:203 (6.3.4) This put the poor woman into a very great passion, and by the frequent reproaches and imprecations she cast at these rapacious villains, she had provoked them to anger against her;
War 6:204 (6.3.4) but none of them, either out of the indignation she had raised against herself, or out of the commiseration of her case, would take away her life; and if she found any food, she perceived her labors were for others, and not for herself; and it was now become impossible for her anyway to find anymore food, while **the famine** pierced through her very bowels and marrow, when also her passion was fired to a degree beyond the famine itself; nor did she consult with anything but with her passion and the necessity she was in. She then attempted a most unnatural thing;
War 6:205 (6.3.4) and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, “O, thou miserable infant! For whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine, and this sedition?
War 6:206 (6.3.4) As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! This famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us: yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other.
War 6:207 (6.3.4) Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews.”
War 6:208 (6.3.4) As soon as she had said this she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate the one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed.
War 6:209 (6.3.4) Upon this the seditious came in presently, and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her, that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready. She replied, that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son.
War 6:210 (6.3.4) Hereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them, “This is mine own son; and what hath been done was mine own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself!
War 6:211 (6.3.4) Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half, let the rest be reserved for me also.”
War 6:212 (6.3.4) After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at anything as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother. Upon which the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately; and while every body laid his miserable case before their own eyes, they trembled, as if this unheard-of action had been by themselves.
War 6:213 (6.3.4) So those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die; and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not lived long enough either to hear or to see such miseries.

No travel on Sabbath:
***Antiq.* 13:252** (13.8.4) And truly he did not speak falsely in saying so; for the festival, which we call Pentecost, did then fall out to be the next day to the Sabbath: **nor is it lawful for us to journey, either on the Sabbath day, or on a festival day**.
Whiston Note: The Jews were not to march or journey on the Sabbath, or on such a great festival as was equivalent to the Sabbath, any further than a Sabbath-day’s journey, or two thousand cubits.

24. **War Preface 1:1** Whereas the war which the Jews made with the Romans hath been **the greatest of all** those, not only that have been in our times, but, in a manner, of those that ever were heard of; both of those wherein cities have fought against cities, or nations against nations

25. Cestius left unexpectedly, allowing refugees to flee – Jews began war prep. Jews could no longer use Romans to kill Christians. Church fled to Agrippa and Roman cities where the church was protected (like Antioch).

War 2:556 (2.20.1) After this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews **swam away from the city**, as from a ship when it was going to sink; Costobarus, therefore, and Saul, who were brethren, together with Philip, the son of Jacimus, who was the commander of king Agrippa's forces, **ran away from the city**, and went to Cestius.

26. Josephus records all these things in great detail. That is what his *Wars* books are mainly focused on.

27. We looked at these same references up in #2

28. **War 6:369** (6.7.2) Nor was there any place in the city that had no **dead bodies** in it, but what was entirely covered with those that were killed either by the **famine** or the **rebellion**; and all was **full of the dead bodies** of such as had perished, either by that sedition or by that famine.
War 3:123 (3.6.2) Then came **the ensigns encompassing the eagle**, which is at the head of every Roman legion, the king, and the strongest of all birds, which seems to them **a signal of dominion**, and **an omen** that they shall conquer all against whom they march;

29. See the references we read in #2
When cities were burned, the smoke darkened the sun and moon.
Astrological phenomenon were indeed seen above Jerusalem, as we noticed in the Josephus, Yosippon, Tacitus and Eusebius quotes under point #2. Josephus mentions a lot of signs and bad omens which indicated their destruction was coming.

30. We saw that Josephus records the angelic/demonic activity that was seen in the sky. Eusebius in both his Ecclesiastical History and his **Theophania** makes a big point about the demonic powers being subjugated by the work of Christ. (see the signs we mentioned in #2). The book of Revelation also mentions this angelic warfare and the casting down of the demonic forces at the time of the Parousia and the downfall of the Great Harlot City Jerusalem.

31. Same signs we mentioned in #2.

32. **War 2:649** (2.22.1) in all parts of the city, darts and all sorts of armor were upon the anvil. Although the multitude of the young men were engaged in exercises, without any regularity, and all places were full of tumultuous doings; yet the moderate sort were **exceedingly sad**; and a great many there were who, out of the prospects they had of the calamities that were coming upon them, **made great lamentations**.
War 2:455 (2.17.10) while men **made public lamentation** when they saw that such occasions were afforded for a war as were incurable; that the city was all over **polluted with such abominations**, from which it was but reasonable to expect some **vengeance** even though they should escape revenge from the Romans; so that the **city was filled with sadness**, and every one of the moderate men in it **were under great disturbance**, as likely themselves to undergo punishment for the wickedness of the seditious;

33. Same signs we discussed in #2

34. The angelic activity was seen in the sky, indicating that these events did occur as predicted. Same signs we discussed in #2. This seems to be a reference to the rapture, when the angels gathered the elect who had lived and remained until the End of the Great Tribulation (the Neronic persecution).

While the Neronic Persecution Raged (AD 64-66)

From here onwards we are nearing the End, the final stage when the persecution accelerated, and evil proliferated. Jesus and all the prophets referred to it as the **Birth Pangs of the Messiah** and of the *World to Come*, when the troubles that accompanied the end of the age and the arrival of the age to come became much more **frequent and intense**, just like the labor pains of an expectant mother about to give birth. As the arrival of the Age to Come drew near, the troubles multiplied and intensified. Jesus told the apostles that this greater frequency and intensity of tribulation would be a sign that **the End was drawing near**. This was clearly something that they would have been able to see and experience and recognize as a sign of the End. Christ warned them not to go to sleep and ignore the warning signs, but to be ever vigilant and alert and sober-minded, so that it would not catch them by surprise like a thief in the night. Jesus told them that his coming would not be hidden, secret, or obscure. It would be plainly visible and recognizable, just like the lightning which flashes across the sky. They would not miss it, or be left around afterwards wondering if He came. They would see Him at His return, glorify Him on that day, and marvel at Him in the presence of all who had believed (2 Thess 1:10). The angels gathered them into His presence (Matt 24:31). Their bodies were changed (1 Cor 15:52; Php 3:21), and they entered into His heavenly presence (Jn 14:3; 2 Cor 4:14; 1 Thess 2:19; Eph 5:23-33; Jude 24-25; 2 Thess 2:1; 1 Thess 4:17), where they would remain forever afterwards (1 Thess 4:17).

The Neronic Persecution was that kind of sign, which told them that the End was definitely getting very near. The tribulation instantly became more frequent and intense. They not only saw it happening, but felt and experienced those Birth Pangs personally. Most of those first century saints died in that persecution, or fell away back into paganism or Judaism. Those who deserted Christianity and went back to Judaism thought they were escaping all the tribulation. They did not realize they were setting themselves up to suffer a much worse tribulation, and a long drawn-out slow painful torturous death at the hands of the Zealots and the Romans in the war with Rome shortly afterwards. They gained nothing by going back to Judaism. Instead, they lost everything, physically and spiritually. The Christians' suffering in the Neronic persecution was indeed intense, but it was quickly over with, and they kept their soul salvation. They did not have to suffer a long time, in comparison to the starvation and other things the Jews suffered during their protracted war with Rome, plus they had their spiritual salvation on top of it.

Dead or alive, the Christians came out victorious in that contest. They were the overcomers. The Greek word for **victor** or **overcomer** is **NIKE** or **NIKAO**, from which the NIKE brand of sportswear comes. The Christians were the victors and overcomers in that great tribulation. They took all the spoils of war. Death of their bodies in the SEEN realm only promoted them to glory and immortality in the UNSEEN spiritual realm. Physical death was a time of victory celebration for those martyred Christians, as well as for the living and remaining saints who received the same reward at the Parousia. But for the unbelieving and rebellious Jews, it was a time of utter weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

What is Scripture talking about when it promised **relief** to those remaining saints, their **rescue** out of the tribulation, and their being **caught up** to the heavenly reward? Was this just symbolic language about the arrival of the Kingdom, or is it talking about something those first century saints would actually see, hear, and experience? It was the promise of these kinds of reward that drove the apostles and their fellow workers to sacrifice everything to get the gospel out to the whole Diaspora. They did not go through that horrible persecution and tribulation, thinking that the second coming would come and go without them getting any benefits from it, or even knowing that it occurred. They were fully expecting to see it, hear it, and experience it to the max. They wanted that **immortality** and **life** and **glory** that Jesus promised to give them at His return. They wanted to see Jesus at His return and hear him say, “Well done!” That is why Apostle Paul says in Romans 8 that he considered the "sufferings of this present time" as not even showing up as a dot on the radar screen in comparison with the **glory** that was about to be revealed to them. Paul implies here that all Christians, dead or alive, would see that glory revealed and share in the benefits of it.

That forces us to ask: "Was that glory revealed to them? Did they see it and experience it in any way? Did they know they got it? And if they saw that glory revealed and experienced the benefits of it, and were still alive on earth afterwards, why don't we hear about it? How could they remain silent about that glorious experience? They should be shouting from the rooftops and dancing in the streets about it. Anything but silent – especially in view of Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius who were saying that the

Parousia was still future. Those saints who experienced the Parousia would have spoken up and set the record straight. And if those saints had not experienced the glorious return of Christ as they were expecting, they would have been sorely disappointed and disillusioned, and would have been complaining about the non-fulfillment – anything but silent about it. Their **silence** screams **absence**. They were gone. Christ took his bride with him when he returned.

Have you ever noticed that women, especially single women, love to attend weddings and be involved in helping the bride prepare for her wedding day? Why is that? The beauty and radiance of the bride, along with the chivalry of the groom, marks this occasion as special, exciting, joyful, hopeful, and meaningful. There is a new permanent, everlasting relationship that is being established here. Single women long for the day when their prince charming will ride into town, swoop them up, and take them with him to live happily ever after. That is something they dream about all through their childhood. When the **Bridegroom returned for His bride in AD 70**, the bride was not expecting to be left behind afterwards. She was expecting to go with him to his prepared place, and live happily with him forever afterwards. She was expecting to experience something at His return, not be left confused afterwards wondering if anything really happened. When the Groom returned for His bride, did he consummate the marriage with His bride back at His Father's house in heaven as He had promised? Did she experience that consummation in heaven? Did she stay there and live happily ever after with Him at her new home in heaven? Or did He leave her behind on earth and not take her to be with him? Was she bitterly disappointed about being left behind? What does it mean when a Groom leaves the bride at the altar and goes on his merry way without her? It means he did not marry her after all, and that the marriage was never consummated. What do we call the period of time between the engagement and the marriage? The espousal. That is the description of the forty-year transition period leading up to AD 70. The Parousia was NOT the beginning of the espousal period, it was the return for the bride, and the carrying away of the bride to the Father's house, where the marriage would be consummated, and the new couple would live forever afterwards. If the bride was left on earth after AD 70, there is only one conclusion we can draw from that: either the groom did not return, or the marriage was never consummated. In that case, the bride should be screaming **"Jilted"** at the top of her lungs! But we do not hear the complaints, nor the joyous shouts from the rooftops. All we hear is silence. Do you catch the power of that?

The transition period was the espousal period, when the bride was preparing herself for that glorious day when her prince charming would come riding in the sky on his white horse and snatch her away. We need to look at what was going on in Judea during the two years leading up to their revolt. The revolt did not just pop up all of a sudden and happen without a process of development beforehand. The Jews went from a very warm relationship with Nero in AD 64 to an open break with Rome in AD 66, only two years later. Something must have happened during this two short years which rapidly escalated the tensions between them and provoked the Jews to go to war. It is like the fuel rods in a nuclear reactor heating up toward meltdown. There was a breakdown in the leadership which was normally able to keep things cool and under control. Gessius Florus let the troubles in Judea multiply and intensify to the point that the Jews could no longer tolerate it. There were problems during the previous governors (Festus and Albinus especially), but they quickly worsened under Gessius Florus. He became procurator right about the time the Neronic persecution began (Summer of 64), and remained procurator until the war began (Summer of 66). It was during his governorship that **the meltdown occurred**, and Josephus blames Florus for provoking the Jews to go to war.

It is also at this time that the **Christians went silent**. It was no longer safe to preach the gospel or even openly meet together as a church. They were running for their lives. If they did worship together with any other Christians, it was secretly and in hiding. We know that there were still some Christians around, since Jesus promised that "some of them" would **live and remain until the Parousia**. The great tribulation would be cut short so that the "elect" could remain alive until the angelic gathering at the Parousia (Matt 24:31). But in order to survive until the Parousia, **they had to go underground** and disappear off the radar screens of the Jewish and Roman authorities. That is why there are no more books written by them after the outbreak of the Neronic persecution. The NT canon was finished by that time. The gospel had already reached the whole Diaspora. The apostles had finished their assignment, and just in time. The End had now arrived. The saints would undergo judgment first (1 Pet 4:17) in the Neronic persecution, and then the wrath would be poured out upon their persecutors.

As we noted previously, the Christians had been warned to get out of Judea and Jerusalem two years in advance of the Neronic persecution. Eusebius tells us that they were warned by a certain Revelation to leave Jerusalem before the wrath was poured out. We see that prophetic warning reflected in both Paul's

letter to the Hebrews and John's Apocalypse. If the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea had obeyed those warnings to flee in late 62 and early 63, they would have been out of harm's way when the Neronic persecution began in the Summer of 64. Eusebius tells us that **some of the Christians did leave** Judea, but we do not know how many, nor exactly when.

We do know that after the Neronic persecution began in the late Summer of 64, it would no longer have been safe for Christians to remain anywhere in Judea or Palestine. Any who were still in Jerusalem at the time the persecution began would have been arrested and put to death. There was probably no warning in advance that the Neronic persecution was about to strike. It caught them like a hidden trap. If they had left when the books of Revelation and Hebrews had warned them to, they would have escaped in plenty of time. Evidently many of them stayed until it was too late and were killed in the persecution, since they disappear from history and only a small remnant of **Ebionites and Nazareans show up in Pella later**. The majority of Christians were killed. The Neronic persecution and the great apostasy removed most of the Christians except the Elect ones whom Christ had chosen to live and remain until His coming, at which time they would be changed and caught up to be with Him forever afterwards.

This automatically raises the question about the stories we hear from Eusebius about Christians still being alive in Pella after the war, and some of them supposedly coming back to Judea to restart the church there. A closer look at those traditions reveals the Judaizing character of those supposed "Christians" who were in **Pella**. They were **Ebionites** and **Nazareans**, both of which were Judaizers, and most of whom denied the virgin birth and Deity of Christ. Apostle Paul taught in the book of Galatians (as early as AD 51-52) that those who required circumcision and law-keeping had "severed themselves from Christ." They were no longer true Christians. They were Judaizing apostates. No wonder they were still around after AD 70. They were not true Christians, so they were left out of the rapture like the five foolish virgins in the Parable of the Bridegroom (Matt 25). They had severed themselves from Christ.

There were Gnostics, heretics, and apostates that were left behind as well. They had copies of the NT writings, by which the writings were preserved and distributed again after the war. That may also explain how some of the corruptions of the text happened so early. The Gnostics and Judaizers may have deliberately tampered with the text to reflect their own views, or to correct some of the imminency texts that seemed not to have been fulfilled according to their physical-kingdom-on-earth expectations.

Since there were no first generation Christians still around to guide the new Christians that popped up after the Parousia, it is not surprising to see those post-70 Christians confused and ignorant about the occurrence of the Parousia. They had the New Testament scriptures to guide them, but no one from the previous generation was there to help them understand it. No wonder we find so many errors in the second century church writers. We will say a lot more about the state of the church after AD 70 in the upcoming podcast series on the First Generation After the End. For now, however, we need to look at what was happening in those two years between the beginning of the Neronic persecution and the outbreak of the Jewish war.

Apostle John Killed by the Jews (Late 64) During the Neronic Persecution

Fall 64 – John's martyrdom. Apostle John was "killed by the Jews" (most likely in the Neronic persecution), according to Papias [*Papias* 5:5; 6:3 in "The Fragments of Papias", *The Apostolic Fathers*. Michael W. Holmes]. Since the island of Patmos was a Roman-controlled exile island, it does not seem likely that John would have been killed by Jews there. It is more likely that he would have been released from Patmos and resettled in nearby Ephesus where the Jews would have had easy access to him, and there are traditions which suggest this. Patmos was just off the west coast of Asia Minor (Turkey), so news of the Neronic persecution would have reached Patmos about the same time it reached Ephesus and the seven churches, then a short time later the news would have reached Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea, and Jerusalem. Since the island of Patmos was controlled by the Romans, it seems almost certain that Apostle John, if he was still on Patmos at the time of the outbreak of the Neronic persecution, would have been killed by his Roman captors as soon as they received the word from Nero. John was not a Roman citizen, so he would NOT have been allowed to appeal to Caesar for a trial in Rome, like Paul did. The fire in Rome was July 64. The persecution began shortly afterwards (Aug 64). News of that persecution would have reached Patmos within a few weeks at the most, and John would have been immediately executed. However, as we mentioned

above, there is good reason to believe that he had been released from Patmos before the outbreak of the Neronic persecution. In that case, the traditions about his activity and death in Ephesus would make a lot more sense. Whether on Patmos, or in Ephesus, we can be sure that the outbreak of the Neronic persecution in late Summer and early Fall of AD 64 would have proven fatal for the apostles like Peter, Paul, and John. The Jews would have taken full advantage of this Roman persecution to settle old scores against the Christians. Papias said that Apostle John was "killed by the Jews", just as Jesus had predicted in Matt. 20:23 and Mark 10:39. That would fit the tradition that he died in Ephesus at the hands of the Jews there, who used the Neronic persecution as their authority to kill John. [*Papias* 5:5; 6:3 in "The Fragments of Papias", *The Apostolic Fathers*. Michael W. Holmes]

Things Go Badly for Nero and the Jews After They Killed the Christians (AD 65)

It appears that the Neronic persecution was the beginning of the end for Nero and the Jews. Things began to degenerate rapidly from AD 65 onwards. The storm clouds of God's Judgment were looming on the horizon, not only for the Jews, but for the Romans as well. Nero and the Jews had unleashed a great tribulation upon the Church, and now it was their turn to reap what they had sown. The wrath was about to be poured out upon them. God sent all kinds of signals "in the heavens and on the earth" that He was about to judge them for what they had done to His people.

Mar 65 – Nero assaulted his "religious" wife Poppaea, and caused her death. Poppaea was pregnant, and Nero, in a fit of rage, assaulted her (allegedly kicked her in the midsection) causing the deaths of both her and their unborn child. This was the beginning of the end for the Jewish cause. Through the influence of Poppaea the Jews had been able to win many benefits from Rome, but now Nero was no longer as sympathetic to the Jewish cause. This relationship of the Roman emperor married to a wife who was favorably disposed toward Judaism, may have been in the mind of John when he penned the book of Revelation. The Jews probably used their influence with Poppaea to get Nero to kill the Christians. Was Poppaea a symbol of the Harlot City (Jerusalem), who was drunk with the blood of the saints? This is another reason why I believe Paul was arrested and martyred before AD 65. The Jews had an ally in Nero up until the death of Poppaea. After she was killed, it is less likely that the Jews would have been able to use Roman power against the Christians. The tide was beginning to turn against the Jews. This may have been the beginning of the “cutting short” of the tribulation that Jesus mentioned in his Olivet Discourse, coupled with increasing unrest and rebellion in Judea, which provoked the Romans to withdraw their protection from the Jews and begin gathering their forces to crush the rebellion. The Jews no longer had the Romans as an ally, but instead as their adversary, and were forced to drop their active campaign against the Church and focus all their energies on preparation for the war. This would have “cut short” the tribulation against the Church. Josephus was supposedly still in Rome at this time, but he does not say anything about the persecution of Christians, nor about its being cut short later.

April 65 – The Conspiracy of Piso against Nero. When Nero discovered the conspiracy against him, he had many of Rome’s leading citizens killed. Warmington says a lot about this in his book on *Nero*:

> The object of the conspiracy was the assassination of Nero and his replacement as emperor by the noble C. Calpurnius Piso” (*Warmington* 136).
>
> The motives of the conspirators were various, some quite trivial. Lucan is said to have joined because he had been forbidden to publish; Afranius Quintianus because he had been insulted in a lampoon by Nero; Faenius Rufus because he feared the influence of his co-prefect Tigellinus. The consul designate Plautius Lateranus and the courageous freedwoman Epicharis were moved by *amor reipublicae* [love of the republic] (patriotism...). The participation of Faenius Rufus, with three tribunes and three centurions of the praetorian guard, had a double significance. No conspiracy had much chance of success without the support of the praetorians; more important, officers of the guard were naturally chosen for reliability as well as efficiency; they came from Italian towns whose upper classes had a tradition of loyal service to the emperors and where senatorial pretensions were little regarded. (*Warmington* 137)

Tacitus [*Annals* 15:62-68] attests the actual words of the Tribune Subrius Flavus (one of the most active of the conspirators) when asked by Nero why he had broken his oath: “I hated you, though no soldier was more loyal when you deserved our love. I began to hate you when you became the murderer of your mother and wife, a charioteer, an actor and an **incendiary."** (*Warmington* 137)

Notice that latter charge ("incendiary" or fire-starter). The Tribune was putting his life on the line by making this accusation against Nero. He had nothing to gain by it, and everything to lose. It was probably testimony like this against Nero which reignited the rumors that Nero had ordered the fires to be started in Rome the previous Summer. It is amazing that, after eight months had passed, and a scapegoat had already been punished for the fire, that a Roman Tribune, notoriously loyal to the emperor, was found involved in a plot against Nero, and claiming that part of the reason for his involvement in the plot was because Nero was an *incendiary*. Nero wasted no time and spared no expense to cover his tracks and get rid of all the evidence against him. Blood flowed again in Rome.

It is interesting that Apostle Paul had been in prison in Rome two years before this, and had said in his letter to the church at Philippi just before his release that "his imprisonment in the cause of Christ had become well-known throughout the whole **Praetorian Guard** and to everyone else" there in Rome, including "**Caesar's household**" (Php. 1:13; 4:22). That would suggest that there were some Christians in the palace and in the military there in Rome. No wonder the Tribune Subrius Flavus was mad at Nero for starting the fires in Rome. Some of his fellow soldiers, friends, or relatives may have been killed in the persecution that followed. Or his own home and possessions may have perished in the flames.

Mid 65 – Nero ordered Seneca to commit suicide. Seneca was the tutor of Nero, and then became the chief advisor to Nero after Nero became emperor. Nero believed that Seneca was somehow involved in the Piso conspiracy against him, or at least somewhat sympathetic with some of the conspirators, so he ordered Seneca to kill himself, which Seneca attempted and failed, then finally succeeded with a little help from his friends.

Tensions Were Building in Judea Toward the Outbreak of War (AD 65-66)

AD 65 – Gessius Florus (Roman Procurator) looked the other way as the armed bands of Zealots raided the cities and villages of Judea. He let them plunder, hoping that it would inflame the populace to revolt. And it worked. The next year in AD 66 the revolt broke out. Like Albinus and Festus before him, he continued to push the Zealots further and further toward open rebellion. The Zealots became determined to revolt and started gathering men and materials. Josephus says that Florus encouraged the bandits and rebels to spoil the Judean cities and give him his share of the booty. This policy of looking the other way while Judean cities were being plundered by Jewish rebels became intolerable for the moderates and loyalists in the Jerusalem leadership. Armed groups of bandits terrorized the Judean countryside with no one to stop them.

AD 65 – It was at this time, Josephus says, that **“many people deserted their ancestral homes and sought refuge in foreign provinces”** [*War* 2.279 (2.14.2)]. Many others joined the Zealot cause and started pushing for open revolt. The Christians had already left or been killed in the Neronic persecution. If any of them had fallen away back into Judaism, they would have been under tremendous pressure at this time to join the Zealot rebellion. Josephus notes that many people in Judea left their homesteads, lands, and property and fled to foreign provinces. It was those armed bands of Zealots and bandits which provoked many people to leave Judea. These armed groups were running around all the cities throughout Judea. This would have been a great time for the Jewish people to get out before Florus brought his troops shortly afterward and killed 3600 of them in Jerusalem.

Signs Warned of Coming Doom (AD 65-66)

We are looking at the events leading up to the Zealot rebellion, including those final signs in the heavens and on earth which signaled the arrival of Christ and His angelic armies to reward His saints and to begin pouring out the wrath on their persecutors.

AD 64-66 – **"many false Messiahs** showing great signs and wonders to mislead the elect" (Matt. 24:5, 24). Throughout the period from AD 30 to AD 66, there were several of these false messiahs mentioned both in the New Testament and in external literature: (Theudas, Judas of Galilee, and the Egyptian). From AD 64 onwards, the number of these false messiahs increased rapidly, so that by the time of the revolt in AD 66, it was nothing unusual to see these Zealots gathering up followers and plundering the countryside (Sicarii, Bandits, Robbers, Rebels, and other Deceivers). After Eleazar b. Ananias blew the shofar and took control of the temple during the incident with Florus in Apr-May 66, several more messianic pretenders showed up, including Menahem the Zealot, Simon b. Giora, John of Gischala, and others. See these references in Josephus, Eusebius, and the New Testament: *War* 2.433-434 (2.17.8); *War* 2.258-263 (2.13.4-5); *War* 2.652-654 (2.22.2); *War* 4.503-510 (4.9.3-4); *Antiq.* 20.97-102 (20.5.1-2); *Antiq.* 20.167-172 (20.8.6) cf. **Acts 5:36-37** (Theudas and Judas the Galilean); [cf. *Antiq.* 17.271 (17.10.5) and footnote, *War* 2.56 (2.4.1); 2.118 (2.8.1)], **Euseb. 2.11.2-3** (Theudas); **Acts 21:38** (the Egyptian); **Euseb. 2.21.1-3** (the Egyptian); ***Antiq.* 18.4,9,23** (18.1.1-6), [cf. Eleazar b. Yair at Masada (acc. to Josephus) *War* 7.252-254 (7.8.1), or was it Eleazar b. Ananias? (acc. to Yosippon and Hegesippus)]

Apr 65 – Plague in Rome (and other plagues). About 30,000 died (acc. to Suetonius) in a plague that struck Rome in the Spring of 65. Afterwards there was a powerful whirlwind or hurricane which destroyed crops and fruit trees over a wide area in Campania. There were other plagues and pestilences during the period from AD 30-70 mentioned in Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Philostratus, and Seneca:

Fourfold Gospel (Harmony of the Gospels by McGarvey and Pendleton) comments on Luke 21:11 – There were an indefinite number of **famines** referred to by Roman writers, and at least one **pestilence** during which thirty thousand perished in Rome alone [AD 65]. All these signs are mentioned by unbelieving writers such as Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Philostratus, and Seneca, who speak of them because of their importance and not with any reference to the prophecy of Christ.

Barnes Notes on Matt 24:7. "A pestilence is recorded as raging in Babylonia, AD 40 (*Antiq.* 18.9.8), in Italy, AD 65 (Tacitus 16.13). Both of these took place before the destruction of Jerusalem."

AD 65-66 – **"terrors and great signs from heaven"** – "on the earth is distress of nations with perplexity" – "men **fainting from fear** and expectation of things coming" – Jesus had predicted all this to occur with greater frequency and intensity as the End approached (Luke 21:11, 25-26). What were those "terrors and great signs from heaven"? Josephus may be able to help us here. He said: "Thus there was a **star resembling a sword**, which stood over the city, and a **comet**, that continued a whole year." Whiston comments: "Whether Josephus means that this star was different from the comet which lasted a whole year, I cannot certainly determine. His words most favor their being different one from another." [See Josephus *War* 6.288-289 (6.5.3); *War* 6.296-299 (6.5.3); *War* 4.286-287 (4.4.5); and *War* 2:649-650 (2.22.1); Tacitus *Hist*. 5.13; and *Sepher Yosippon* ch. 87]. Here is what Josephus said about the effect of these "terrors and great signs" upon the Jewish people in AD 66 just as the war was beginning:

> "...in all parts of the city, darts and all sorts of armor were upon the anvil. Although the multitude of the young men were engaged in exercises, without any regularity, and all places were full of tumultuous doings; yet the moderate sort were **exceedingly sad**; and a great many there were who, out of the prospects they had of the calamities that were coming upon them, **made great lamentations**. There were also **such omens observed as were understood to be forerunners of evils**, by such as loved peace, but were by those that kindled the war interpreted so as to suit

their own inclinations; and **the very state of the city, even before the Romans came against it, was that of a place doomed to destruction**. [*War* 2:649-650 (2.22.1)]

Apr 66 – Week before Passover - **Bright light around the altar and the Temple like daylight for half an hour**. Josephus says, “Thus also, before the Jews’ rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread [Passover AD 66], on the **eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan - March-April], and at the ninth hour of the night** [3 AM], so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour.” Whiston comments: “Since Josephus still uses the Syro-Macedonian month Xanthicus for the Jewish month Nisan, this eighth, or, as Nicephorus reads it, this ninth of Xanthicus, or Nisan, was almost a **week before the Passover** on the fourteenth: about which time we learn from St. John that many used to go “out of the country to Jerusalem, to purify themselves,” John 11:55, with 12:1; in agreement with Josephus also, *War* 5.3.1. [see also Acts 21:26f] And it might well be, that in the sight of these, this extraordinary light might appear.” [*War* 6.290 (6.5.3)]

My Discovery of Josephus While in College (1971)

That has given us a little taste of what was happening in Judea in the year or so before the Jewish war. The signs began to occur, just like Jesus had predicted, indicating that the End was drawing near. The birth pains were getting more frequent and intense. Josephus and the other historians seem totally unaware that Jesus had predicted these things, and were simply recording these events as they had been told to them by those who witnessed and experienced those events. It is utterly amazing to see how God used an unbelieving Jew like Josephus to document all these fulfillments without Josephus having a clue how it would be used later to prove Christianity true.

I will never forget the day in my college dormitory when I walked into the dorm room of one of the guys down the hall, and saw a strange-looking oversized book on his shelf next to all his religious books. It had the word **JOSEPHUS** on its spine. I had never heard of that book before. I asked the guy what it was all about, and he said (and I will never forget his words): *"That is the first century Jewish historian who recorded the history of the Jewish war with Rome in which the temple was destroyed in 70 AD."* That is the first time I had ever heard someone talk about the destruction of the temple like that. That instantly aroused my interest. I asked him where I could get a copy of that book, and went right down to the Christian bookstore and bought one. I started reading it, underlining it, highlighting it, and annotating it in the margin. That was the beginning of my love affair with Jewish and Christian history. And it was the beginning of my pursuit of an understanding of the book of Revelation (1971).

Summary of Dates and Sequence of Events in AD 66

AD 66 - Xanthicus (Nisan or March-April)

Xanthicus 8 (about a week before Passover) - Bright light around the temple

Xanthicus 15 (Nisan 14 -Passover) - Heifer gave birth to a lamb; Eastern gate of inner court of the temple opened by itself.

Xanthicus 15 - Both Gessius Florus (procurator) and Cestius Gallus (Roman Legate in Antioch of Syria) were present in Jerusalem for the previous Passover festival in AD 65 (the year before this one). But it is not clear whether Gallus was in Jerusalem at the Passover in AD 66. It was probably only Florus who was present at this Passover in AD 66, which explains why he was able to get away with his atrocities.

AD 66 - Artemisius (Iyar or April-May)

Artemisius ?? - Violence erupted in Caesarea

Artemisius 15 - Florus marched hastily from Sebaste (Samaria) to Jerusalem

Artemisius 16 - Slaughter of 3600 citizens of Jerusalem by Florus' troops

Artemisius 17 - Florus had two more cohorts of soldiers brought in from Caesarea, for the purpose of breaking into the temple and seizing the rest of the temple gold

Artemisius 21 - Angelic armies seen in the sky above Judea

Sequence of events according to the Josephus.org website:
http://www.josephus.org/warChronology1.htm#map

1. Rebel priests took control of the Temple (around Passover AD 66)
2. Agrippa sent troops against the rebels
3. Sicarii joined the rebels and forced the loyalists from the upper city
4. Royal (Agrippa's) and Roman soldiers took refuge in Herod's palace
5. The rebels burned the house of Ananias, the palace of Agrippa, and the Archives building where debt records were kept, then defeated the Roman garrison in the Tower of Antonia
6. Menahem brought armaments and weaponry from Masada, and took command of the assault on the Herod's palace.
7. Menahem was successful in driving the Royal and Roman soldiers from the palace to the towers of Phasael, Mariamne, and Hippicus. Menahem had Ananias b. Nedebaeus killed. Ananias was an ally of Agrippa, and very much opposed to the Zealot cause of Menahem. After doing all this, Menahem paraded himself through the city in purple as if he was now the King (in replacement of Agrippa and the other contenders).
8. Menahem and his bodyguard were attacked in the temple by the forces of Eleazar (the son of Ananias whom Menahem had just killed). Most of Menahem's bodyguard were killed and Menahem himself was captured and killed. The rest of Menahem's soldiers joined with the other rebel forces or fled to Masada.
9. The Romans in the towers surrendered to Eleazar and were killed. Thus, all of Jerusalem was in the hands of the rebel forces under the command of Eleazar.

More Signs at Passover in AD 66

Apr 66 – Both Florus and Gallus had been present the preceding year for the Passover festival (AD 65). But there is no mention of Cestius Gallus being at this Passover in AD 66. It was probably only Gessius Florus who was present at this one.

Apr 66 – Passover - **Heifer gave birth to a lamb in the temple courtyard**. Josephus says: “At the same festival also [i.e., Passover, April AD 66], a **heifer** (a young virgin cow), as she was led by the **high priest** to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.” *War* 6.292 (6.5.3). Now before we ridicule this story from Josephus, we need to remember that the priests in the temple were the ones who witnessed this event, specifically the high priest himself. If we had to pick some reliable witnesses, the priests would surely be at the top of the list, especially the high priest, as we have here on this occasion. And Josephus was a priest himself. It is highly unlikely that he would have recorded this event unless it really happened. At the time he wrote in 78 AD, there were still living some of his fellow priests who could have easily discredited this story. Yet, as far as we know, no one disputed it. This event occurred at the Passover inside the temple in April of 66 AD, just a few months before the revolt.

Even after pondering the significance of this event several times, it was not until preparing this material for a podcast that I remembered how my dad on the farm explained the difference between a heifer and a cow. They were all cows to me, but he said, "A heifer is a young female who has never had a calf. It is a young girl cow, who has never mated with a bull, in other words, a young virgin cow." Now when I remembered that conversation with my dad on the farm, I suddenly understood the significance of this young virgin cow giving birth to a Lamb in the temple at Passover! Mary was a young virgin who had never had a child of her own, who gave birth to the true Passover Lamb of God whose blood on the doorposts protects all who are in His household from the Death Angel.

Now, that may not be the true explanation of this incredible event, so it is only a suggestion for our consideration. I wish we had Apostle Paul's perspective on it. God was definitely trying to get their attention by this event. What was He trying to tell them? We may never know for sure, but the Virgin Mary and her little lamb Jesus makes a lot of sense. Any Jewish person familiar with the virgin birth of Jesus could have seen that connection and understood what God was trying to say to them. It was at least an affirmation of the virgin birth of Jesus, if not a whole lot more.

Furthermore, the high priest who led away this heifer to be sacrificed was the grandson of the very

High Priest who led away Jesus to be crucified 36 years earlier! His name was **Matthias**, son of Theophilus, and the **grandson of Ananus I**.

This may shed some light on why this unusual birth of a lamb by a heifer in the temple occurred at the very time it was being led away to be killed by **this particular High Priest**. We have to wonder if God was sending a message, not only to the whole Jewish people in general, but even more particularly to the **family of Ananus**, showing them that He remembered what Ananus had done to Jesus 36 years earlier, and was about to bring them to judgment for it. Did Matthias catch the significance of that? Or was he only thinking about the delicious feast his family would get from that beefy sacrifice? I wonder if he rubbed his chin and thought, "Hmmm, there is something happening here, what it is is not exactly clear, but it doesn't look good for me and my family! This is not a good sign!" Did he remember any of the things that his grandfather Ananus I and uncle Caiaphas had done to Jesus thirty-six years before? Did he realize that the blood of Jesus was imputed against that whole generation of Jews, and his own family of Ananus specifically? Notice what these texts have to say about this:

> **[John 11:49-52]** But one of them, **Caiaphas**, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is **expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish**." Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, **he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad**.
>
> **[John 18:24]** So **Annas (Ananus I) sent Him bound** to Caiaphas the high priest.
>
> **[Mark 15:1**] Early in the morning the **chief priests** with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and **binding Jesus, they led Him away** and delivered Him to Pilate.
>
> **[Matt. 27:20-25]** But the **chief priests** and the elders **persuaded the crowds** to ask for Barabbas and to **put Jesus to death**. But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "**Crucify Him**!" And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!" When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." **And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!**"

It is extremely interesting that the High Priests at the beginning and end of that generation were from the **family of Ananus**. I would not be surprised at all to find out in heaven that this incident of the heifer giving birth to a lamb was a "thunderbolt out of the clear blue sky" to the family of Ananus. It was one of those "Remember Pearl Harbor" moments. Remember that guy your grandfather and uncle killed 36 years ago? His blood-guilt is on you and your house, and it is about to be avenged.

This particular High Priest **Matthias** probably had more than just the blood of Jesus imputed against him. VanderKam and Derenbourg suggest that Matthias was **appointed High Priest right about the same time the Neronic persecution struck the Church in Judea in late 64 AD**, implying that this was the very high priest who **enforced Nero's persecution** in Palestine. If so, it means that he himself **had the blood of the martyred Christians on his own head**, and that he was one of the brood of vipers whom Jesus had in mind when He said that they would "fill up the measure of the guilt of their fathers" by killing His disciples in the coming generation. He seems to have been the High Priest who literally finished "filling up the bowl of wrath" that his grandfather and uncle had partially filled 36 years before:

> **[Matt. 23:31-39]** "So you testify against yourselves, that you are **sons of those who murdered the prophets**. **"Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.** "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? "Therefore, behold, **I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will**

scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. **"Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!** "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!'"

So, it seems that this strange occurrence of the heifer giving birth to a lamb in the temple at Passover exactly 36 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, may very well have been a sign from heaven that the Lamb of God born of virgin Mary was indeed the Son of the Most High, Judge and Avenger of His martyred saints, and was about to come on the clouds of heaven to pour out upon them the bowl of wrath that they themselves had filled to the brim, destroy the temple, desolate the land, kill the wicked, and scatter the rest of them among all the nations. But that was not the only strange event that occurred at Passover in AD 66. Josephus tells us more:

Apr 66 – Passover - **Eastern Temple Gate Opens By Itself**. Josephus continues: "Moreover, [at the same festival, Passover, April 66] the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night [midnight]. Now, those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. ...this signal **foreshowed the desolation that was coming** upon them" [*War* 6.293-296 (6.5.3)]. Cornfeld says: "The gate referred to is the Nicanor gate, which gave access to the inner court. It is known that on the pilgrimage festivals the gates of the Temple were opened to the people at midnight. The reported extraordinary occurrence (also echoed by Tacitus, '*apertae repente delubri fores*') is also mentioned in an obscure dissertation on an extra-Mishnaic halakha (ordinance) relating to omens:"

"Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['For the Lord'] did not come up in the **right hand**; nor did the crimson-colored strap **become white**; nor did the westernmost **light shine**; and the doors of the Hekal would **open by themselves**, until R. Yochanan b. Zakkai rebuked them, saying: Hekal, Hekal, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself? I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Ido has already prophesied concerning thee: Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars." [Bab. Talm. *Yoma* folio 39b, cf. Zech. 11:1]

Abomination and Lawlessness (AD 66)

Apr 66 – Violence erupted in Caesarea (AD 66). This violent clash occurred in the month of **Artemisius** (Iyar, April-May) of AD 66. Josephus says that this is the event that inflamed the seditious to revolt. The Greek residents of Caesarea a few years earlier (AD 60) had obtained control of the government of the city from Nero, putting the Jewish inhabitants at disadvantage. In AD 60, Beryllus, one of Nero's tutors, appealed to Nero and obtained a letter revoking the equal rights status of the Jews in Caesarea. This emboldened the Syrian-Greek inhabitants of Caesarea, and provoked the Jewish citizens to resist these encroachments upon their freedom and prosperity. Over the next six years, there was intensification of that conflict, pushing in the direction of open rebellion. For Josephus' comments on this, see *Antiq.* 20:173-184 (20.8.7-9) and *War* 2.13.7. See also the Josephus.org website for more info on this: **http://www.josephus.org/causesOfWar.htm#wilderness**

The building which the Jews used for their synagogue was owned by a Greek who would not sell it to the Jews, even though they repeatedly offered him many times its value. He built other structures

around the synagogue, leaving only a very narrow passage between the buildings, thus making it very difficult to access. The Jews complained about this impediment, but it only got worse. Then on a Sabbath day in the Spring of AD 66, as the Jews were gathering at the synagogue, a Greek insulted the Jews by sacrificing some birds on top of an earthenware jar at the entrance to the synagogue, implying that the Jews were unclean and leprous, and that their occupancy of the premises was defiling it and polluting it. [*War* 2.284-296 (2.14.4-6)] This inflamed some of the younger hotheaded Jews beyond containment. It very quickly erupted in violence on both sides. **Jucundus**, the Roman commander of cavalry, intervened and took away the earthenware jar and attempted to stop the violent clash. But the Greek inhabitants were too intense for him. The Greeks had the upper hand in the struggle and left the Jews no other option but to take their scrolls and relocate to the nearby city of Narbata. The date of this clash is given by Josephus as "the twelfth year of the reign of Nero [AD 66] ... in the month of Artemisius" [Iyar, April/May]. *War* 2.284-296 (2.14.4-6). This evidently occurred right after Passover which was in the month of Xanthicus (Nisan, March-April).

Apr 66 – Florus Ordered the Temple Treasury to Give Him 17 Talents of Gold. The Jewish leadership from Caesarea and Jerusalem appealed to Governor Florus to correct the injustice done to them by the Greeks in Caesarea, but it only made matters worse. The Roman governor, Gessius Florus, did everything he could to provoke the Jews into open rebellion, and he succeeded. When the ethnic violence broke out in Caesarea between the Jews and the Greeks, Florus should have intervened with his troops and pacified both parties. The Jews in Caesarea even bribed Florus with 8 talents of gold to intervene on their behalf, but he took their money and did nothing to help them. And the bribe only made him greedy for more. Florus “blew up the war into a flame” [*War* 2.293 (2.14.6)] by ordering the temple treasury to give him seventeen talents of gold, ostensibly to cover some taxes that they had not yet paid. But some historians doubt whether they were actually behind in paying their taxes, since this occurred right around the time of Passover when they normally paid all their taxes.

There could be something else going on here which Josephus does not mention for fear of upsetting his Roman patrons who paid him to write this account of their victory over the Jews. Nero was preparing to go to Greece at this time to participate in their games and music competition (from Sept 66 until early 68). He was heavily involved in building his new palace (the Golden House) after the fires in July 64 had partially destroyed his old palace. This new palace would require vast amounts of gold to complete it. While Nero was in Greece he sent some of his soldiers throughout the countryside of Greece and even to Turkey to raid their temples and confiscate their gold. Nero needed lots of gold to finish building his golden house and was snatching gold away from any of his tributary cities who had it. And, as we know, Florus was a close personal friend of Nero, and may have had orders from Nero to confiscate as much gold from Judea as he could, and send it to Nero. This could have been one of the factors involved in Florus's greedy grab for temple gold.

Josephus claims this action by Florus was the very provocation which pushed the Jews over the edge into revolt. When Florus’ representatives came to Jerusalem to collect the 17 talents of temple gold, "some of the seditious" insulted Florus’ greed by taking up a collection in the marketplace to help the poor Florus, who was in such a destitute condition [*War* 2:293-296 (2.14.6)]. This enraged Florus when he found out about it, and “**he marched hastily** [from Sebaste] **with an army** of horsemen and footmen against Jerusalem that he might …bring the city into subjection” [*War* 2:296 (2.14.6)].

Apr 66 – Florus Encamped in Jerusalem and Killed 3600 Jews (Artemisius 16, AD 66) - His hasty march to Jerusalem [from Sebaste-Samaria] must have been an alarming thing for the citizens of Jerusalem. When they saw the Roman army of Florus approaching, they went out of the city to meet him peaceably, and welcome him to the city. However, Florus was not in the mood for pleasantries, and sent the Centurion Capito with fifty soldiers on ahead of him to instruct the Jewish people to go back into the city [*War* 2.297-298 (2.14.7)]. Florus then brought his army into Jerusalem and camped in Herod’s Palace. The next day he met with the Jewish leadership, but when they refused to deliver up the youths who had mocked him, he ordered his soldiers to plunder the Upper Market Place and kill any they found there (incl. men, women, children, and even infants). Some of the Jewish people who died were of equestrian order (i.e., they had the equivalent of Roman citizenship and aristocratic status) whom Florus’ soldiers (illegally) whipped and crucified. They even threatened King Agrippa’s sister Bernice who happened to be in Jerusalem fulfilling a vow at the temple [*War* 2:307 (2.14.9)]. According to Josephus and the online *Jewish Encyclopedia* in their article on Gessius Florus, this slaughter of 3600 citizens of Jerusalem occurred on the **16th day of the month Artemisius** (Iyyar or

April-May) in AD 66. [*Antiq.* 20.11.1; *War* 2.284 (2.14.4) and 2.315 (2.15.2); See also Graetz, *Gesch*. 4th ed., iii. 445-450 et seq.; Schurer, *Gesch*. 3d ed., i. 585, 601 et seq. G. M.]

Apr 66 – **Florus had two more cohorts of troops come from Caesarea, and attempted to seize the rest of the gold in the temple.** It seems that Florus obtained the 17 talents of gold, but it was not enough – he was "provoked to get still more" [*War* 2:295 (2.14.6)]. Florus wanted all the gold that was left in the temple. On the next day after the massacre in the Upper Market, Florus ordered the chief priests to send the people out to meet the two cohorts of soldiers, coming in from Caesarea. However, he had instructed the incoming soldiers not to return the salutes of the people, and that if any of the Jewish people complained about this rude behavior, to use their clubs on them. This is exactly what happened. As the people began to flee away, the cavalry ran them down and trampled them. Josephus said, "a great many fell down dead by the strokes of the Romans, and more by their own violence in crushing one another ... at the gates." [*War* 2:315-327 (2.15.2-5)]

The reason Florus had two more cohorts of soldiers come from Caesarea, was so that he could forcibly enter the temple and seize the rest of the gold stored there. Evidently, the goal of the soldiers was to enter through the Bezetha quarter, and then through the tower of Antonia and seize upon the temple, but the whole populace of the city blocked all the lanes of the city so that the temple was inaccessible. Then the Zealots quickly knocked out the cloisters which joined the Tower of Antonia to the Temple, so that in case Florus' soldiers did get as far as Antonia, they would not have easy access to the Temple. This frustrated the attempt of Florus to get into the temple area to get the rest of the gold out of the Temple Treasury. So he took two cohorts and went back to Caesarea, leaving one cohort there as an occupational force to help the Jewish leadership restore order and keep the peace. [*War* 2.328-332 (2.15.5-6)]

This attempt to get control of the temple gold was viewed by the Jews as an attack on Judaism itself. The temple gold had no images of Caesar on it. And since the Jews were no longer allowed to mint their own gold coins, the depletion of the imageless coinage from the temple would virtually shut down the sacrificial system. Sacrificial animals could only be purchased with imageless coins. The money changers relied upon an abundant supply of such imageless gold to exchange Roman coins with images on them for temple coinage without the images. This money exchange business was very profitable. Without imageless coins in the temple treasury, there could be no purchase of sacrificial animals without bringing coins with images on them into the temple (which would be an abomination). Florus was attempting to shut down the Jewish sacrificial system and bring images of Caesar into the temple in order to convert it to a Roman shrine. The Jews understood what the intentions of Florus were, and thwarted his attempt by blocking all the lanes of the city and tearing down the connection between the Tower of Antonia and the Temple cloisters so that his soldiers were unable to get into the temple and seize its imageless gold. [*War* 2:328-332 (2.15.5-6)]

This was not just a random act of greed on the part of Florus. Nor was it just normal gold coinage that he wished to obtain. It was a calculated assault on the Torah-compliant gold coinage that the temple required for purchase of sacrifices. Josephus seems to allude to this in veiled language when he said: "This cooled the avarice of Florus, for whereas he was **eager to obtain the treasures of God**," as soon as he saw there was no way to accomplish it on that occasion, "left off his attempt," took two of the three cohorts and headed back to Caesarea [*War* 2:331-332 (2.15.6)].

We have to wonder whether Nero was supportive of this attempt to get Roman coinage with his deified images on them received into the temple. Since the wife of Florus was good friends with Poppaea, and that relationship enabled Florus to get the governorship of Judea originally, it would seem that Florus was closely allied with Nero. This appears even more to be the case, since the Roman Legate at Antioch (Cestius Gallus) was very hesitant to censor or restrict Florus in any way. That implies that Florus had the approval of Nero for this policy of removing all the remaining imageless coinage from the temple, so that the Jews would be forced to bring in coins with Nero's image on them. Nero was certainly capable of concocting or supporting such a plot, especially at this time right after his deified image was put on the coinage. The fact that his wife Poppaea, who was friendly toward the Jews, had died the year before, means that the Jews no longer had a direct or strong connection with Nero. His megalomania and narcissism could easily explain his attempt to force emperor-worship on the Jews, as he had done to the Greeks and most other nations throughout the empire. Furthermore, Nero was raising funds for the construction of his Golden House in Rome, and had ordered all the provinces to send in more tribute (taxes) to help with that. This may explain why

Florus wanted the rest of the gold from the Temple. While Nero was competing in the contests in Greece (AD 67) he sent some of his soldiers to rob nearby temples in Greece and Turkey. So it would not be hard to believe that Nero was supportive of these attempts by Florus to get the Temple gold.

No Roman coinage with human images on it could be brought into the temple. This would have violated the second commandment (no graven images). Four years before this (AD 62) the Romans (under Nero) had deliberately stopped the minting of any more Torah-compliant coinage. The Jews were not allowed to mint their own coins that were Torah-compliant, so this meant that the supply of coinage that they had in the temple would be all they could store in the temple treasury. Unfortunately this supply of coinage had a tendency to dwindle down as a result of the money-changers, so that eventually they would run out of gold and be forced to bring coins with Caesar's image into the temple. Florus wished to hasten this process by seizing all the Torah-compliant gold out of the temple. The Jews understood very well what Florus was trying to do. They had seen this on the horizon four years earlier when the Romans stopped minting Torah-compliant coinage. So when Florus made his attempt with his armies to seize the temple gold, the citizens of Jerusalem "immediately turned back upon him, and stopped the violence of his attempt, and stopped up the narrow passages of the city "so that his troops could not get to the temple. Furthermore, some of the seditious "got immediately upon those cloisters of the temple that joined to Antonia, and cut them down." [*War* 2.328-330 (2.15.5-6)].

Apr 66 - This was an attempt to bring idolatrous coinage into the temple.

Ken Gentry (*The Beast of Revelation*, p. 64) explains the deification of Nero and his appearance on the Roman coinage at this time: "That Nero actually was worshipped is evident from inscriptions found in Ephesus in which he is called "Almighty God" and "Saviour." ... As his megalomania increased, the tendency to worship him as ruler of the world became stronger, and in Rome his features appeared on the colossus of the Sun near the Golden House, while his head was represented on the coinage with a radiate crown... Nero deified his child by Poppaea, and Poppaea herself after their deaths."

Another writer noted: "This coin [a silver tetradrachm, or four-denarius piece] struck in Syria refers to Nero's wife Poppaea whom he married in AD 63. In AD 65 she became the victim of Nero's brutality when she died as a result of a kick to the abdomen while pregnant which Nero had delivered during a fit of anger. ... The obverse of this coin shows Nero wearing a radiate crown, the headdress of the divine. Nero was the first living Roman to wear this crown on coin types. Before this, only men who had been deified after death, such as Julius Caesar and Augustus, were given this honor."

Note what Collingwood says about this: "The common currency of Judea, in 66 CE, had come to include coins bearing the image both of a living god-king [Nero] and of his dead-god-wife [Poppaea] whom he had slain – on opposite sides of the same coin."

"Now, what kind of coin are we to suppose that Florus removed from the Temple treasury? Presumably the only kind of coin that the Temple treasury was allowed to hold, namely coins without an image either of Caesar or of any other man – and supply of which was already so short that any further scarcity of it would greatly impede Temple worship (and yet further enrich the money-changers in the outer court). Presumably the 17 talents of that Florus removed from the Temple treasury was all he could get, namely, all it had.... The Temple coin supply once had been far greater, but had been depleted by prior Roman depredations. When the Roman commander Sabinus seized the Temple and plundered it, during the Feast of Pentecost in 4 BC, amidst the succession crisis following the death of Herod the Great, Josephus relates, "the soldiers fell upon the treasure of God, which was now deserted, and plundered about four hundred talents, of which sum Sabinus got together all that was not carried away by the soldiers." [*War* 2:50 (2.3.3.)]

"And what kind of coin are we to suppose that the Jews of Jerusalem threw into baskets, taunting Florus to take them instead of Temple treasure? The ubiquitous, but idolatrous, coins of the Empire, of course! The message was clear: you want money, take it in your own abundant coin, not the scarce image-free coin that is acceptable for Temple donation. One could hardly have been procurator of Judea and failed either to get the point, or to understand the underlying religious issue; indeed, it could hardly have been mistaken even in Rome, where Jews, by AD 66, were a far-from-unfamiliar governance problem. Florus' action can only be construed as Josephus construes it: as **a deliberate religious provocation**, intended to force the Temple to accept the image of the Emperor, represented as a god, onto its premises as part of its ritual. By ceasing to strike Torah-compliant coins after 62 CE, Roman authorities in Judea had been systematically pursuing this policy even before Florus attempted to seize the Temple's small remaining stock of Torah-compliant coin in AD 66. Where Caligula's statue

had been too large to enter, might not Nero's small coins infiltrate?

"Not surprisingly, the Temple priesthood responded, after some contentious deliberation, by discontinuing sacrifice for the Emperor – effectively delegitimating Roman rule over Judea and countenancing revolt." Taken from the website (accessed on 6/28/13): **http://spengler.atimes.net/viewtopic.php?t=10921&start=20&sid=5aeda15f797cdeedbb266867c50d4780**

A person who goes by the email epithet of "Collingwood" wrote the post that we just quoted, and claimed that the Jewish writer Spengler was right on target when he asserted that the robbing of 17 talents from the temple was directly related to emperor worship and the bringing of images of the emperor into the temple (via the coinage that had the emperor's deified image on it). In Jewish eyes, it was the same issue they confronted earlier in AD 40 when Caligula ordered Petronius and his army to go to Jerusalem to have a statue of himself placed in the temple there. **That was an abomination** which the Jews were prepared to resist to the bitter end. Fortunately Caligula died before the order was ever carried out. But the same kind of thing is involved here with Florus. He was not only robbing the temple of its imageless gold (which was a sacrilege), but also attempting to force the Jews to bring images into the Temple. The Jews would rather go to war than allow that to happen. See also *War* 2:433, 435; *Antiq.* 20.11.1 (20.257-258) and *Antiq* 10:137.

This incident fits all the requirements of the **Abomination of Desolation** that were predicted by Daniel and reiterated by Jesus in Matt 24. It is the very kind of threat against the Temple, at the very time and place, that the prophets predicted. It deserves a closer look than it has been given to date.

Apr 66 – Lawlessness Was Increased. Throughout the period from AD 30 to AD 66, there were several false messiahs mentioned both in the New Testament and in external literature [*War* 2.433-434 (2.17.8); *War* 2.258-263 (2.13.4-5); *War* 2.652-654 (2.22.2); *War* 4.503-510 (4.9.3-4); *Antiq.* 20.97-102 (20.5.1-2); *Antiq.* 20.167-172 (20.8.6) cf. **Acts 5:36-37** (Theudas and Judas the Galilean); [cf. *Antiq.* 17.271 (17.10.5) and footnote, *War* 2.56 (2.4.1); 2.118 (2.8.1)], **Euseb. 2.11.2-3** (Theudas); **Acts 21:38** (the Egyptian); **Euseb. 2.21.1-3** (the Egyptian); ***Antiq.* 18.4,9,23** (18.1.1-6), [cf. Eleazar b. Yair at Masada (acc. to Josephus) *War* 7.252-254 (7.8.1), or was it Eleazar b. Ananias? (acc. to Yosippon and Hegesippus)]. From AD 64 onwards, the number of these false messiahs increased rapidly, so that by the time of the revolt in AD 66, it was not unusual to see such false messiahs (Sicarii, Bandits, Robbers, Deceivers, and Zealot rebels) gathering up followers and **lawlessly** plundering the countryside [*War* 2:264-265 (2.13.6); cf. *War* 2:272 (2.14.1) and *Antiq* 20.197ff (20.9.1-5)]. Since the Roman Procurators Albinus and Florus were given a share of the booty, they ignored the pleas of the law-abiding citizens to stop the plundering [*War* 2.277 (2:14.2) and *Antiq* 20.252-257 (20.11.1)]. So lawlessness was rapidly increasing at this time, both by the Roman procurators and by the bandits.

At Paul's trial in Jerusalem in AD 58, the High Priest Ananias broke the Law by striking Paul on the mouth (Acts 23:1-3). This was not the only law-breaking that Ananias was guilty of (sent his goons to seize all the tithes for himself), and it set the example for his son Eleazar to follow here in 66 AD. Like father, like son. In this case, the son went way beyond the example of his father. After Eleazar b. Ananias blew the shofar and took control of the temple during the incident with Florus in Apr-May 66, several more messianic pretenders showed up, including Menahem the Zealot, Simon b. Giora, John of Gischala, and others. From AD 66 onwards Josephus tells us that the Zealots and Jewish religious leaders kept laws only selectively, if at all [*Antiq* 20:200-203 (20.9.1); *War* 7.253-273 (7.8.1); 2:409-417 (2.17.2-4); 4.556-563 (4.9.10); 4.184 (4.3.10)]. So, here in early 66, the amount of law-breaking and lawlessness began to rapidly escalate and proliferate, just as Jesus had predicted: "lawlessness is increased" (Matt. 24:12).

Apr 66 – Eleazar, the Man of Lawlessness? Eleazar was the son of Ananias b. Nedebaeus, the former high priest (AD 47-58) when Second Thessalonians was written (AD 51-52), as well as six years later in AD 58 at the time of Paul's trial in Jerusalem (Acts 23). It was Ananias who ordered that Paul be struck on the mouth. Upon being struck, Paul predicted, "God is about to strike you, you whitewashed wall" and then called him a **lawbreaker**. As was the father (a lawbreaker), so was the son (an even worse lawbreaker). Eight years after the trial of Paul, in September of AD 66, Ananias was "struck" dead by the Zealot leader Menahem, immediately after which his son **Eleazar** used his own temple soldiers to avenge his father by killing Menahem and his soldiers in Jerusalem, again in **violation of the Law**. Thus, Eleazar opposed every other Zealot leader and **exalted himself above them all**.

At the time of the rebellion, Eleazar was *Sagan* (captain of the temple guard, "governor of the temple", *Wars* 2.409). That was the second highest position in the priesthood (right underneath the High Priest). The Sagan was appointed by the High Priest and approved by the Sanhedrin. At least two of the sons of Ananias b. Nedebaeus (Eleazar and Ananus) had held that office, both of whom were appointed after Ananias had left the High Priesthood. This speaks volumes about how much wealth, power, and influence Ananias must have had, in order to get two of his sons appointed as Sagan after he was no longer High Priest. Josephus verifies just how extremely wealthy and powerful Ananias really was.

A few months after the incident with Florus in Apr 66, Eleazar **illegally** stopped the daily sacrifices of all Gentiles (in Aug 66). This was totally unprecedented and **lawless** in the extreme. Never had Gentile sacrifices and offerings been refused. Ever since Moses and Aaron had instituted the sacrifices at the tabernacle, God had ordered them to accept all Gentile offerings and sacrifices (as long as they were clean animals and not unclean).

So here they were, at the very time God was grafting the Gentiles into His Church, the Zealots were breaking off all religious ties with the Gentiles—quite a contrast! The moderate Jewish leadership and priests all reminded Eleazar that to do such a thing would be to **set himself above the Law** which had commanded them to accept Gentile sacrifices. They demanded that he restore those sacrifices, but he defiantly refused.

As Yosippon indicates (*Sefer Yosippon*, Chapters 72, 75), Eleazar was the one who literally "**sat in the temple**" controlling all the affairs of the temple, priesthood, and sacrifices, and used the Temple as his fortress during nearly the entire war, beginning in April AD 66, until just before Titus began the siege in AD 70 (about three and a half years). Eleazar took it upon himself to make changes in the Law and customs that had always been followed since the beginning of their nation. Thus, it appears that **Eleazar** may have been the **Man of Lawlessness** that Apostle Paul pointed to in his second letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:3-9).

Some preterists think that **Nero** was the "Man of Lawlessness." However, there is no historical evidence that Nero ever set foot in Judea, Jerusalem, or the Temple, nor that he changed the Jewish sacrificial laws, nor that he was "slain by the breath of Christ's mouth" at the Parousia (2 Thess. 2:8). Nero committed suicide in AD 68, two years before the end of the war in AD 70. If Nero was the Man of Sin, then the statement that "he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess 2:4) would have to be figuratively interpreted. That approach seems dubious to me.

Others have suggested **John of Gischala** as the Man of Lawlessness, even though he did not get control of the temple until right near the end of the war, after most of the abominations had already been committed in the temple. Nor was John of Gischala "slain by the breath of Christ's mouth." Instead, John was taken to Rome where he was paraded through the streets of Rome during the Triumph, and then kept in Roman prison until he died several years later. Very few of the statements in 2 Thess. 2 can be applied to John. Furthermore, **Simon b. Giora,** another of the three main Zealot leaders, was dragged through the streets of Rome and thrown over the cliff in sacrifice to the Roman gods right after the Triumph of Vespasian and Titus. Simon never had control of the temple, so it is impossible to see him as the one who "sat in the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:4).

Of the three original Zealot leaders, only **Eleazar b. Ananias** is unaccounted for. Josephus drops all mention of him after the war council in Jerusalem in AD 66, but both Yosippon and Hegesippus state that he stayed in Jerusalem and maintained control of the temple throughout the war, until just before the siege of Titus (mid-70). When John of Gischala broke into the temple with his soldiers and gained control of it (Spring or Summer of AD 70), evidently Eleazar took his family and got out of the city through some of the underground tunnels, and then fled to Masada, where he held out until AD 73. It is interesting that Josephus mentions the fact that the defenders of Masada, including Eleazar himself, were **slain** by the hand of their own fellow Zealots in a mass suicide pact. Then their bodies were thrown into the blazing fire and burned to ashes there on top of Masada. We will say much more about all that when we get to that part of the history in AD 73.

When viewed through the historical lens of Josephus, Yosippon, and Hegesippus, **Eleazar b. Ananias** does have a lot of connections with the Man of Lawlessness, as he is described in 2 Thess. 2:3-9. If he is the Man of Lawlessness, then the one who restrained him was his own father (Ananias b. Nedebaeus) who held a tight rein on him until AD 66 when Menahem killed Ananias. Eleazar was then freed from restraint, and immediately began to manifest his LAWLESS nature.

Apr 66 – <u>Abomination of Desolation</u> ("Jerusalem encompassed by armies") [Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Lk. 21:20] Somewhere in this timeframe (Spring of AD 66) just before the war began, we would have to place the Abomination of Desolation. Both Matthew and Mark in their accounts of the Olivet Discourse (the Synoptic Apocalypse) say that the Abomination would **stand in a holy place where it should not be**. Luke was definitely aware of both those accounts when he composed his gospel, and it is clear that he understood the Abomination to be **armies or army encampments in the area around Jerusalem**. We noted above the movements and actions of Florus' troops in his attempt to seize all the gold in the temple and force the Jews to bring coins into the temple with Caesar's deified image on them. This was viewed by the people of Jerusalem as an attack on their religion (not just on their pocketbook). They would not sit idly by and let Florus get away with this.

This phrase ("abomination of desolation") would immediately arouse the interest of Jewish people because they believed that at the end of the age an evil man of lawlessness (cf. 2 Thess. 2) would do something abominable like Antiochus did. The word abomination is referring to an abominable person or thing which would defile the temple or Jerusalem and cause it to be desolated and destroyed. The word abomination had strong connections with idols and pagan sacrifices to idols, or anything unclean which pollutes the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Something utterly abhorrent like this would happen to force the Jews to go to war, just like they did in the days of Antiochus. As Antiochus tried to Hellenize the Jews and change their religion to pagan idolatry, so the Romans tried to paganize the Jews and force idolatry and emperor worship upon them.

The approach of Florus' Roman troops toward Jerusalem could easily have been understood by the Jewish people as a signal to flee. (Matt. 24:15-20; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20) It was the first time since the days of Caligula (AD 39-41) that a Roman commander had brought that many **soldiers (three cohorts) to Jerusalem** with such a hostile intent (to rob them of their imageless coinage, and force them to use coins with Caesar's image on them). Plus, there were **Zealot armies** forming at this very time who came to Jerusalem shortly after this with their armies to take over the leadership of the war effort. So there were **several armies encircling Jerusalem** at this time, including the **angelic armies** that were seen in the clouds a few days after Passover. If there were any Christians remaining in Jerusalem after the Neronic persecution (which is doubtful), they would have seen all this army and angelic activity and remembered the warning that Christ had given them to flee when they saw armies encircling Jerusalem. This would have been the last chance for any remaining Christians to get out safely, so that none of them would be caught up in the Zealot takeover of the city shortly afterwards, and so that they could remain alive until the Parousia (and the rapture). The longer they waited, the riskier it became. But we have no mention of any Christians still being left in Jerusalem at this time, nor does Josephus indicate that any Christians participated in the war afterwards, on either side.

As we noticed previously, Eusebius stated that the Christians had received a warning to flee a few years before the war (Euseb. Eccl. Hist. 3.5). After the Neronic persecution began (late 64), and especially after the Zealot rebellion broke out (mid-66), it would have been extremely difficult for any Jews, especially Christians, to flee out of Judea. Note what Josephus says about this: *War* 2.556 (2.20.1); *War* 4.565 (4.9.10). Because of the persecution, and the desire of the Zealots to enlist every available Judean in the war effort, the suffering and hardship in Judea at this time was getting worse by the day. Jesus had warned the Judean Christians and all Judeans about this: "woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are **nursing babies** in those days... your flight not be in Winter or on a **Sabbath**" (Matt. 24:19-20). Sure enough, it all came to pass: A nursing mother slew her infant son for food in the famine during the siege [Euseb. 3.7.1-2; *War* 6.201-213 (6.3.4)]. No travel was allowed on the Sabbath, because the city gates were closed [*Antiq.* 13.252 (13:8.4)].

If any Christians were still in Palestine a few days after Passover in AD 66, they would have seen another sign to leave Judea when they saw the angelic armies in the clouds. **Either of these events (the armies of Florus, or the Zealots, or the angelic armies in the clouds) would have provided a clear signal for the Jews to abandon Judea for refuge elsewhere.** Many more signals to leave were provided within the next two months.

Menahem the Zealot took his army to Masada and captured it from the Roman garrison there, while Eleazar the captain of the temple guard used his soldiers to occupy the temple and put a stop to the daily Roman peace offering. Armed bands of Zealots were running around Judea and all around Jerusalem, and inside Jerusalem as well. By August of AD 66 there were plenty of "armies encompassing Jerusalem" inside and outside (Luke 21:20). Jerusalem was a holy place where such

armies ought not to be standing. The Zealot leaders brought their armies right into the temple and camped there (where they definitely ought not to be). Josephus (a priest concerned for the sanctity of the temple) was horrified at this abomination, and even more so when the Zealot factions began killing each other and the priests and the innocent worshippers right there inside the temple. This indeed was a horrific abomination which caused its desolation.

The Romans considered it abominable when blood of their countrymen was shed in their pagan temples [cf. *War* 2:210 (2.11.3)]. Josephus tells how the blood of priests and common people was shed inside the Temple [*War* 5.11ff (5.1.3)]. There are dozens of references in Josephus where this kind of abominable activity is mentioned and lamented by Josephus: *War* 4.201-203 (4.3.12); *War* 4.215 (4.3.13); *War* 4.242 and 4.261-262 (4.4.3); *War* 4.313 and 318 (4.5.1); *War* 4.437 (4.7.6); *War* 4.151 (4.3.7) and 4.388 (4.6.3); *War* 4.558-565 (4.9.10); *War* 5.442-445 (5.10.5); *War* 6:316 (6.6.1); *War* 6.428 (6.9.4); *War* 4.163,171,181-183 (4.3.10); *War* 7.262-270 (7.8.1); *Antiq.* 20:166 (20.8.5); *Antiq.* 20.165 (20.8.5) – The **Sicarii** murdered in the temple, thus polluting it. *War* 5:17 (5.1.3); *War* 2.455 (2.17.10) – "abomination" used in reference to Priest Eleazar's murder of the Roman garrison on a Sabbath day. Euseb. 3.5.4 and 3.7.4-9

The outbreak of the rebellion “cut short” the persecution upon the Church in Judea, since the Jews now had to turn their attention to preparations for the war and their own survival against Rome (Matt. 24:22; Mk. 13:20). Conditions in Judea and Jerusalem now grew progressively worse by the day. Florus had succeeded in provoking the Jews into open rebellion, so that his own perverse activity would appear innocent to Nero.

It is therefore not surprising that some of the priesthood (under the leadership of **Eleazar b. Ananias**) two months later (Aug 66) made their break with Rome official by stopping the daily sacrifice (peace offering) for the Roman Emperor (Nero), as well as the sacrifices of all Gentiles. The removal of 17 talents of imageless gold from the temple treasury had left them little choice. The temple could no longer function normally. They would have to mint new coins, and that meant revolt against Rome. When the Zealots made their decision to revolt, their minting of new coins most likely would have begun soon afterwards (May 66). This early date for the minting of the first year coinage is in agreement with a coin auction email which stated:

Ancient Jewish Coin Brings Record $1.1 Million At Heritage Auctions: The first silver shekel struck in Jerusalem by Jewish forces rebelling against Roman oppression in the first century CE, one of only two specimens known, brought a world record price of $1,105,375 at Heritage Auctions on March 8 [2014] as part of the auction of The Shoshana Collection of Ancient Coins of Judea.... **"This Year 1 silver shekel, struck shortly after the Jewish War began in May of 66 CE**, is an incredible piece of history. This is literally one of the very first coins the Jewish rebels struck after they ousted the Romans from Jerusalem, sending shockwaves through the empire," said Cris Bierrenbach, Executive Vice President of Heritage Auctions. [boldface emphasis added]

The Zealots intensified their efforts of gathering men, weapons, and finances for the revolt. They urged all their sympathizers throughout Israel and the Diaspora to support and join the Zealot cause (deceiving the nations to go to war – cf. the book of Revelation).

Josephus dates the unofficial beginning of the revolt from this very incident with Florus. The Zealots were provoked to go to war by his attempt to remove all the temple gold and force Nero's coinage to be used instead. The people despised Florus even more than the previous governors (Felix, Festus, and Albinus). Florus urged Cestius Gallus to intervene at this time and crush the rebellion before it gained more momentum, but instead Cestius merely sent an emissary (Neapolitanus) to inspect the situation and determine how serious it really was. This only bought the Zealots more time to fan the flames of revolt even more. Evidently Cestius did not trust Florus’ assessment of the situation, since the Jews had also sent a delegation to Cestius at the same time Florus did. This provocation by Florus happened right around the time of Passover. Josephus says the killing of the 3600 citizens and residents of Jerusalem occurred on the **16th day of Artemisius** [*War* 2:315 (2.15.2)], just five days before the angelic armies were seen in the clouds (21st day of Artemisius) [*War* 6.296 (6.5.3)].

Conclusions: Thus, it seems likely that this incident with Florus, and the actions of Eleazar in response to it, may have been the occasion when the prophecies of the **Abomination of Desolation** and **Man of Lawlessness** began to be fulfilled. We offer this as one possibility for serious consideration. It certainly seems that Florus did everything in his power to provoke the Jews to go to war. At this time in late 65 and early 66, when they saw these abominable and lawless activities, was the last chance for the Jewish people to flee from Judea easily and safely. Yet it seems that most of them stayed and got caught up in the war.

Questions About Pella and the Rapture

When we suggest that the brutal actions of Gessius Florus and his troops at Passover in AD 66 might have been the Abomination of Desolation and the time when some of the Jewish people fled from Judea, invariably a few questions arise about the purpose of Christians fleeing to Pella at this time if there was going to be a rapture shortly:

Question 1 – Wouldn't this have been a good time for Christians to leave Judea? ANSWER: Yes it would, IF there were any Christians still left there. However, as we have seen, the Christians were warned in AD 62 or 63 to leave before the Neronic persecution broke out in 64. If they had stayed in Judea, they would have been killed in the Neronic persecution, and would not have remained alive until the Parousia.

Question 2 – Why did Christ command them to flee from Judea if there was going to be a rapture? ANSWER: It was so that they would live and remain until the Parousia. If they stayed there, they would have been killed in the Neronic persecution and not remain alive to be raptured at the Parousia. The reason so many of us ask this question is because we assume that the Christians fled to Pella just before the war began in AD 66. But such a late departure from Judea creates a real historical problem. The Christians needed to leave Palestine long before AD 65-66. They needed to leave in AD 63 or early 64 before the Neronic persecution started. That is why both the book of Revelation and the book of Hebrews were written, to warn them to get out of Palestine before the Neronic persecution struck. This should be obvious to all of us, but because we have forgotten about the Neronic persecution, or failed to sequence it properly in relation to the other endtime events, we have been thrown off-track by this question.

Question 3 – If there were very few believers who survived the Neronic persecution, what was the purpose of fleeing to Pella afterwards, especially if they were going to be raptured shortly? ANSWER: This question presupposes a sequence and timing of events that does not harmonize with the way these events actually happened. Here is the (incorrect) order of events that is presupposed by this question:

1. Neronic persecution killed most Christians (AD 64-66)
2. Warning to flee just before the siege of Jerusalem (AD 66-68)
3. Parousia and Rapture (AD 70)

The reason why some preterists have arrived at this wrong sequence and timing of events is because there are still some leftover futurist concepts floating around inside our heads. For example:

1. Many of us still think that the **tribulation** upon the church that is mentioned in Matthew 24 was only referring to the suffering of the Jewish people under the siege in Jerusalem. We don't realize that it was instead referring to the horrible afflictions the church suffered under the **Neronic persecution** before the war.
2. We also don't realize **when the flight to Pella actually took place**. We assume it was about the time the war broke out in Judea, but that would conflict with the fact that the majority of Christians had already been killed in the Neronic persecution. There were few (or none) Christians left in Judea by the time the war began in 66 AD. What would be the point of warning them to get out AFTER most of them had already been killed? That wouldn't be a very timely or helpful warning. They needed to be warned BEFORE the Neronic persecution, not AFTERWARDS.

Furthermore, Josephus tells us that Essenes, Zealots, Pharisees, and Sadducees all participated in the war effort, but there is no mention of any Christians, either staying and participating, or trying to get out of the city. If there were any Christians still left in Judea and Jerusalem at the time of the war, we would have expected Josephus to mention their attempt to flee and get away from the city, or their participation in the conflict on one side or the other. But Christians are nowhere to be found. They were not a factor in the war on either side. There is no mention of them. They drop totally out of the historical narrative before the war began.

Since most of the Christians died in the Neronic persecution during the two years before the war, it means that any warning to flee out of Judea at the beginning of the war would have been a little too late to be of any real benefit to the Christians.

Therefore, the warning to flee must have been related to the Neronic persecution. *This is the real game-changer!* Once we realize that Jesus was warning them about the Neronic persecution, and NOT about the siege of Jerusalem, it instantly clears up the confusion, and re-sequences the events in a way that makes much better sense.

Most of us (including myself) have been so historically handicapped from our futurist days that we miss this point. That is why I began digging deeply into this historical study eight years ago. The one event that we have all overlooked is the Neronic persecution in AD 64. That is the 800-pound gorilla in the room that everyone has ignored. I missed it for a lot of years. Few preterists are even aware of it as a factor in all this, much less understand where it fits into the overall sequence of events. Most of us have assumed that the great tribulation upon the church was the siege of Jerusalem (68-70 AD), and that the Neronic persecution was a part of that tribulation which was still going on during the war until Nero died in 68 AD. Unfortunately, that idea simply does not harmonize with the Bible or with history, as we will see.

Jesus said in Matthew 24 that “unless those days of the great tribulation [the Neronic persecution] were cut short, NO life would have been saved.” For the sake of “the elect ones” those days were indeed cut short, so that there would still be some elect ones (faithful Christians) on the earth at the time of the Parousia when Christ sent forth His angels to gather those “elect ones.” Notice the actual sequence in which these events really occurred:

1. Great Tribulation on the Church would be Cut Short (AD 64-66)
2. Immediately afterwards Christ would come (Passover 66)
3. He would send the angels to gather the elect (Pentecost 66)

Eusebius tells us that the Christians were “warned by a Revelation given to approved men BEFORE THE WAR” to flee out of Judea. However, he does not tell us how long before the war this warning was given. But the peculiar wording of his statement suggests that the book of Revelation might have been the source of this warning.

Furthermore, we have two such warnings by apostles ("approved men" indeed) before the Neronic persecution broke out. The book of Revelation, written in late 62 AD, warned them to "come out of her my people" (Rev. 18:4). And the book of Hebrews, which was in circulation by early 63, also warned the Hebrew saints to "go out to Him outside the camp...because here we do not have a lasting city...but we are seeking the [everlasting city] which is about to come" (Heb. 13:13-14). Both of these warnings came to the church well over a year in advance of the Neronic persecution.

That implies that the Neronic persecution was the great tribulation (upon the church) about which the church needed to be forewarned. Those two apostolic warnings were the divine signal the church was waiting for. If the church heeded those warnings and left Judea soon afterwards in 63 AD, they would have been out of harm's way long before the Neronic persecution reached Judea in the Fall of 64 AD. That would have been a great benefit to those saints who fled the country at that time.

However, it does not appear that the warning was heeded by the majority of Christians. Most of the Judean Christians evidently stayed and either fell away back into Judaism, or were killed in the Neronic persecution. Evidently, only a minority of saints left at that time. We know that some of those who went to Pella were not true Christians. They were Judaizers who rejected the virgin birth and Deity of Jesus (Ebionites and Nazaraeans). Some of them may have been "elect" saints who "lived and remained" until the Parousia in the Summer of 66, at which time they were raptured, leaving nothing but the Unitarian Judaizers there in Pella.

We also need to remember that it was not just the Judean Christians who were at risk here in the Neronic persecution. It was all Christians throughout the Roman empire, especially those living in areas

where there were large Jewish communities. When the Neronic persecution broke out, the Jews would have killed the Christians living among them. The Seven Churches of Asia would be a good example of this. Evidently most of the seven churches addressed in Revelation ignored the warning to back away from their connections with the Jewish community, and were totally devastated in the Neronic persecution (AD 64). This is not hard to believe, since Paul told Timothy in his second letter that "all who are in Asia had turned away from him" (in AD 63). This was after they had already been warned by the book of Revelation and the book of Hebrews. Evidently they rejected both warnings, and suffered the consequences shortly afterwards, either in the Neronic persecution, or in the outbreak of war in Judea.

Here is the sequence of events that we are suggesting:

AD 62 – book of Revelation warned the saints to "**come out of her**" (Rev 18:4)
AD 63 – book of Hebrews exhorted them to "**go out to Him** outside the camp" (Heb 13:13-14)
AD 63 – the "elect" saints **fled to Pella** BEFORE the Neronic persecution (AD 62-64)
AD 64 – **Neronic persecution** killed all the Christians who stayed in Judea (AD 64-65)
AD 66 – Neronic persecution was cut short by the Parousia (May 66)
AD 66 – the "elect" saints who fled to safety and remained alive were **raptured (June 66)**
AD 66 – **the War** broke out in Judea (Aug 66)

Notice again that they were warned to flee BEFORE the Neronic persecution, NOT AFTERWARDS as suggested in the question above. Do you see how the proper sequencing of the warning solves the problem of a belated flight to Pella after most of them had already died in the Neronic persecution? The warning came BEFORE the Neronic persecution, and it warned them to get out of Judea before the persecution, not just before the war and the siege of Jerusalem. That makes a big difference in how we understand Matthew 24 and its statements about the great tribulation and their fleeing from Judea.

The Originator of the War

Apr 66 – Eleazar b. Ananias "sounded the shofar" (blew the ram's horn). *Yosippon* and *Hegesippus* fill in some of the details about the beginning of the war which Josephus did not give us. When the Roman Procurator Gessius Florus brought his soldiers to Jerusalem to confiscate all the gold from the Temple (May AD 66), ***Yosippon*** writes that there was a brash young man, **Elazar ben Anani** (Eleazar b. Ananias), who blew the shofar in Jerusalem and rallied the citizens to block the lanes of the city:

> **Elazar ben Anani** [Eleazar b. Ananias] ... being a youth and very stout of heart, saw the evil that Florus did among the people. He **sounded the shofar**, and a band of youths and bandits, men of war, gathered around him, and he **initiated a battle**, challenging Florus and the Roman troops. [*Sepher Yosippon*, ch. 59]

Hegesippus claims that it was this very same Eleazar, "the originator" of the rebellion, who was on Masada after the Temple was burned (*Heg*. 5:53). After blowing the shofar and blocking Roman access to the Temple, Eleazar then seized control of the temple and used it as his fortress (**in violation of the Law**) from that point forward [*War* 2.424 (2.17.5); *Yos*. 61; *Heg*. 2:10; 5:1].

The history of Graetz tells us more about Eleazar: "The soul of the revolutionists in Jerusalem was **Eleazar ben Ananias**, a man of high-priestly descent. He was a scholar and belonged to the school of Shammaites who, for the most part, were sympathizers of the Zealots. ... The movement [was] started by the Zealot chief Eleazar ben Ananias ... who gave the first impetus to the mighty struggle..." [Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, Vol. 2, pp. 182, 189, 195]

AD 66 – More Abominations Which Cause Desolation

Menahem the Zealot (son or grandson of Judas the Galilean) took his army to Masada and captured it from the Roman garrison there, while Eleazar the captain of the temple guard used his soldiers to occupy the temple and put a stop to the daily Roman peace offering. Armed bands of Zealots were running around Judea and all around Jerusalem, and inside Jerusalem as well. By August of AD 66 there were plenty of "armies encompassing Jerusalem" inside and outside (Luke 21:20). Jerusalem was a holy place where such armies ought not to be standing. The Zealot leaders

brought their armies right into the temple and camped there (where they definitely ought not to be). Josephus (a priest concerned for the sanctity of the temple) was horrified at this abomination, and even more so when the Zealot factions began killing each other and the priests and the innocent worshippers right there inside the temple. This indeed was a horrific abomination which caused its desolation.

The Romans considered it abominable when blood of their countrymen was shed in their pagan temples [cf. Wars 2:210 (2.11.3)]. Josephus tells how the blood of priests and common people was shed inside the Temple [Wars 5.11ff (5.1.3)]. There are dozens of references in Josephus where this kind of abominable activity is mentioned and lamented by Josephus: Wars 4.201-203 (4.3.12); Wars 4.215 (4.3.13); Wars 4.242 and 4.261-262 (4.4.3); Wars 4.313 and 318 (4.5.1); Wars 4.437 (4.7.6); Wars 4.151 (4.3.7) and 4.388 (4.6.3); Wars 4.558-565 (4.9.10); Wars 5.442-445 (5.10.5); Wars 6:316 (6.6.1); Wars 6.428 (6.9.4); Wars 4.163,171,181-183 (4.3.10); Wars 7.262-270 (7.8.1); Antiq. 20:166 (20.8.5); Antiq 20.165 (20.8.5) -- The **Sicarii** murdered in the temple, thus polluting it. See Wars 5:11-20 (5.1.3), and especially *Wars* 2.455 (2.17.10) where the word "abominations" was used in reference to Eleazar's perfidious murder of the Roman garrison on a Sabbath day, from which Josephus says "it was reasonable to expect some vengeance" from God. And that vengeance came swiftly, on the same day and hour, Josephus says! [*Wars* 2:457 (2.18.12)] See also Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.5.4 and 3.7.4-9.

Apr 66 – Great Tribulation was "cut short" by the outbreak of war

The Zealot rebellion “cut short” the persecution upon the Church in Judea, since the Jews now had to turn their attention to preparations for the war and their own survival against Rome (Matt. 24:22; Mk. 13:20). Conditions in Judea and Jerusalem now grew progressively worse by the day. Florus had succeeded in provoking the Jews into open rebellion, so that his own perverse activity would appear innocent to Nero.

It is therefore not surprising that some of the priesthood (under the leadership of **Eleazar b. Ananias**) shortly afterwards made their break with Rome official by stopping the daily sacrifice (peace offering) for the Roman Emperor (Nero), as well as the sacrifices of all Gentiles. The removal of 17 talents of imageless gold from the temple treasury had left them little choice. The temple could no longer function normally. They would have to mint new coins, and that meant revolt against Rome. When the Zealots made this decision to revolt, their minting of new coins most likely would have begun soon afterwards. The Zealots intensified their efforts of gathering men, weapons, and finances for the revolt. They urged all their sympathizers throughout Israel and the Diaspora to support and join the Zealot cause (deceiving the nations to go to war – cf. the book of Revelation).

Apr 66 – Josephus dates the unofficial beginning of the war from this incident with Florus. The Zealots were provoked to go to war by his attempt to remove all the temple gold and force Nero's coinage to be used instead. The people despised Florus even more than the previous governors (Felix, Festus, and Albinus). Florus urged Cestius Gallus to intervene at this time and crush the rebellion before it gained more momentum, but instead Cestius merely sent an emissary (Neapolitanus) to inspect the situation and determine how serious it really was. This only bought the Zealots more time to fan the flames of revolt even more. Evidently Cestius did not trust Florus’ assessment of the situation, since the Jews had also sent a delegation to Cestius at the same time Florus did. This provocation by Florus happened right around the time of Passover. Josephus says the killing of the 3600 citizens and residents of Jerusalem occurred on the **16th day of Artemisius** [*Wars* 2:315 (2.15.2)], just five days before the angelic armies were seen in the clouds (21st day of Artemisius) [*Wars* 6.296 (6.5.3)].

May 66 – Few Days After Passover - **Angelic Armies seen in the Clouds** (**Artemisius 21 AD 66**). Josephus says: “Besides these, a few days after that feast [Passover, April AD 66], on the **twenty-first day of the month Artemisius** [Iyar - Apr-May of AD 66], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not **related by those that saw it**, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities.” [*Wars* 6:296 (6.5.3)] Note that Josephus gives the exact “day and hour” of this angelophany. It was just before sunset (**the hour**) on the 21st day (**the day**) of Artemisius. Josephus is following the Macedonian (Greco-Roman) calendar, not the Jewish

Lunar calendar. He says there were many "eyewitnesses" to this event -- which means that it was "at the mouth of two or more credible first century eyewitnesses." **Josephus did not see this because he had not returned from Rome yet when it happened.** The fact that he gives very specific historical documentation for it (places, dates and time of day) lends much credibility to it, and shows that he had talked to several eyewitnesses, and maybe even had some written accounts of it. It is noteworthy that Tacitus refers to this as an actual occurrence, and no other histories of the destruction of Jerusalem reject it as untrue. Even more important is the "matter of fact" way he handles this Angelophany. The idea of angels being seen in the clouds does not seem to be at odds with the way Josephus views the God of Israel and the way He relates to and interacts with His creation through Theophanies and Angelophanies (Jewish Biblical Cosmology).

This event appears to have been **the sign that the Son of Man had come** with his angels to begin "gathering the tares to be burned" and "gathering his wheat into the barn" (Matt. 13:40-43 and 13:49-50). This is not just coincidental. There is most definitely a connection between this carefully documented Angelophany and the prophecies of Jesus. I believe this sighting of the angels in the clouds above Israel was the **sign of the coming of the Son of Man** that Jesus told them to watch for "immediately after the tribulation" (Matt. 24:29-31). Josephus gives the exact Day and Hour ("a few days after Passover" on the **twenty-first day of Artemisius**, just before sunset). [*Wars* 6.296-298 (6.5.3)] This was evidently when Christ began his Parousia (presence) in AD 66 at the time when Josephus says they saw the angelic armies in the clouds. His Parousia (presence to reward and punish) was ongoing after that until the temple was burned -- it was a visitation (extended visit) instead of a one day event. That visitation began in April AD 66 when the commander of the hosts (Jesus, the Son of Man) came with his legions of angels to start gathering up the tares, which would be burned after his **wheat was safely gathered into his barn, i.e., the rapture** (see Matt 13:24-30). [*Wars* 6.296-299 (6.5.3)].

June 66 – Pentecost - Priests in the Temple heard a multitude of voices in the unseen realm which shouted in unison: **"Let us depart from here."** Notice how Josephus describes this event:

> **Josephus**: "Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, **'Let us remove hence.'**" [*Wars* 6.299 (6.5.3)]

Note that Josephus gives us the exact *day and hour* **when** this event occurred (on the day of Pentecost at the hour of the evening sacrifices), **where** it occurred (in the Jerusalem Temple), and **who** witnessed it (the officiating priests). The Jewish priests testified about what they felt and heard in the Temple at night on Pentecost in the year AD 66, at the very time when the Zealot war with Rome was about to begin.

This transfer of a large multitude from one place to another in the unseen realm seems to have been the resurrection of the dead and the change of the living saints, when they were caught up to be with Christ. This event occurred at Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. *Notice also that it occurred at night, not during the daytime. That explains why no one noticed the snatching away of the living saints. Anyone who noticed their absence the next day would have merely thought the Christians were arrested in the night and taken away to be killed, or that they fled away during the night to get away from the persecution.*

It is worth remembering here that Pentecost was the time of wheat harvest, the time when the heads of wheat were threshed and gathered into the barn. The harvest (resurrection of the dead and the judgment) was at the end of the age. It fits the grain harvest typology, as well as the Parable of the Tares, to see the resurrection and rapture as the event that occurred here at Pentecost.

Furthermore, Josephus puts this story in the mouths of his fellow priests who were in the Temple at the very time these events occurred. He seldom gives this kind of strong eyewitness testimony to confirm his account, especially to the point of giving a date and place, and naming his sources, as he does here. The fact that he quotes these witnesses and identifies them, lends much credence to his story. Out of all the possible eyewitnesses who could be deemed reliable in the first century, the priests in the Temple would have been at the top of the list. Those priests were lawyers, judges, scribes, and teachers of the Law. They understood the penalty for false testimony. Some of those

priests survived the destruction of Jerusalem, and could have easily discredited Josephus' account. Yet, as far as we know, this account was never challenged by them, but instead verified "at the mouth of two or more" reliable first-century eyewitnesses (Deut 19:15) and accepted as true by contemporary historians such as Tacitus.

R. C. Sproul, Sr., calls this particular section of Josephus "one of the weirdest passages you ever read in ancient history" ("Last Days Madness" speech, Ligonier Ministries National Conference, Orlando, Florida, 1999). When quoting this passage in *The Last Days According to Jesus*, he describes it as a "most remarkable record" (pp. 123-127). He notes that this story is "corroborated by others" in the first century such as Tacitus (Eusebius, Yosippon, and Hegesippus also record this event). As Sproul suggested, this testimony of Josephus "lends credence" to the idea that there was some kind of coming of Christ associated with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 ("Last Days Madness" speech, 1999).

Every time a preterist uses something out of Josephus to substantiate first-century fulfillment, futurist critics throw a temper tantrum. They first demand that we produce the documentation, and then when we do, they work overtime trying to downplay its significance, and ridicule us for using "uninspired" testimony. Yet, when they wish to justify their own unscriptural doctrines of *creedalism*, *sacramentalism,* or *hierarchialism*, they do not hesitate to quote from the Church Fathers, whom they admit are just as uninspired as Josephus! They want freedom to use uninspired tradition when it helps their cause, but deny that freedom to others.

Preterists do not claim that Josephus' accounts are God-breathed. However, an event does not have to be recorded by an inspired author in order to be true. The story about Julius Caesar being stabbed by two of his best friends is true, but it is not inspired. Moses, Jesus, and the apostles all affirmed that something could be verified as true in a court of law if there were two or more credible eyewitnesses to back it up. This event described by Josephus has that kind of reliable attestation. It could truly have happened, regardless of whether or not the historians recording it were inspired. All we need for historical credibility is "testimony at the mouth of two or more reliable eyewitnesses," and we have that here with the numerous priests who witnessed these things in the temple on Pentecost in AD 66.

Furthermore, we all need to remember that *uninspired* testimony, even if it is "at the mouth of two or more reliable eyewitnesses," can never negate *inspired* Scripture, no matter how well-attested it is. Scripture stands supreme, regardless of how much uninspired historical testimony or church tradition is stacked against it. History and tradition can *only support and explain* Scripture, but can *never refute it or discredit it*. And this is the way we are using Josephus' testimony: to help support and explain inspired Scripture. This is a valid use of history and tradition. With that in mind, let's examine this story to see if we can understand what really happened and how it might relate to the Resurrection and Rapture events.

Pentecost and Wheat Harvest Typology

Notice that neither the priests nor Josephus offer any explanation of this event. In fact, it seems that none of them understood it. Josephus simply laid out the facts as the priests gave them, and we are left to draw our own conclusions about what took place and how it relates to the "end of the age."

I believe several details in this story are significant: (1) the **day** of occurrence (Pentecost), (2) the **hour** of occurrence (night), (3) the **place** of occurrence (the Jerusalem Temple), (4) **who** witnessed the event (officiating priests), and (5) **what** they felt, heard, and experienced.

The first two points certainly remind us of Jesus' predictions about "*the day and the hour*" of His return (Matt 24:36, 50; 25:13; Mark 13:32; Luke 12:46). Furthermore, this occurred on the pilgrim feast of *Pentecost*, which was connected with the grain and fruit harvests. *Passover* was the time of the barley harvest in the Spring, during which the priests brought an "omer" of barley flour into the Temple courtyard and waved it (i.e., lifted it up and presented it) before the Lord (Lev 23:10-11, see Edersheim's *The Temple*, chapter 13). *Pentecost*, which occurred fifty days after Passover, was the time of the wheat harvest in early Summer. It was "the presentation of the two loaves [made of leavened wheat flour] . . . which distinguished this festival" (Edersheim, p. 172). At the time of Pentecost, the wheat harvest had already begun and was nearing completion. The two loaves may have represented the living and the dead (who were both presented to Christ at His Parousia).

Jesus used the harvest metaphor in His teaching about what would occur at His Parousia at the end of the age. A good example of this is the Parable of the Tares (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43), where He uses the wheat harvest motif in connection with the angelic gathering of the wheat into His barn at the End of the Age. In my article in Fulfilled Magazine (Summer 2011, Vol. 6 Issue 2), I explained how this parable was pointing to the Resurrection of the Dead out of Hades and the change of the living into their immortal bodies, at which time both groups were gathered together in the unseen realm and presented to Christ at His Parousia (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:17). John the Baptist also connected the wheat harvest with the End of the Age (Matt 3:12; Luke 3:17), and Paul used wheat imagery in his seed analogy to illustrate how the Resurrection would take place (1 Cor 15:37). See below for a list of PDF articles and MP3 files that give more details on all this.

Therefore, it would be no surprise to discover that this event mentioned by Josephus, which occurred at Pentecost, at the time of the *wheat harvest*, might have something to do with the *Resurrection of the Dead out of Hades*.

What Did the Priests Experience?

The connection of Pentecost with the Resurrection becomes even more apparent when we look at the way the priests described their experience of this event:

> they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “Let us remove hence.” [*Wars* 6.299-300 (6.5.3)]

Notice there were *no visuals* here. It all involved hearing and feeling. This means that the multitude that the priests heard were *invisible*. They were in the UNSEEN realm. The priests were only allowed to *hear* what was said, but not allowed to *see* those speaking. This raises some very interesting questions:

- *Who* were these folks in the unseen realm?
- *From where* had this multitude (in the unseen realm) come?
- *To where* (in the unseen realm) were they going?

The fact that these people existed in the unseen realm significantly limits the possibilities of their identity. What group of people in the unseen realm would be leaving one part of that realm for another part of it, and why? *[Hint: The disembodied souls of the dead saints left Hades and entered heaven.]* And what does the Temple have to do with this transfer from one location to another? *[Hint: According to Jewish tradition, it was the one place on earth where heaven and earth met. It was the gateway to heaven in the unseen realm. Many Jews also believed that the huge rock on which the Temple stood, was the lid which covered the opening to the Hadean realm. In other words, the Temple sat on top of the rock that sealed the gates of Hades, so that if the dead were ever raised out of Hades, they would have to come out through the gates of Hades right there in Jerusalem near the Temple mount.]*

Furthermore, it is worth remembering that this event occurred on *Pentecost* about 45 days after the angelic armies were seen in the clouds "a few days after Passover" [*Wars* 6.5.3 (6:296)]. If the angels were there, then Christ had to be present with them in the unseen realm above. In Matthew 24:31, Jesus said that after His arrival He would send forth His angels to gather together the elect. This transfer of a large multitude of souls from one place to another in the unseen realm sure sounds like the Resurrection of the Dead out of Sheol (Hades) and their entrance into the heavenly realm above. If this was in fact the Resurrection, then it was also the very “moment in the twinkling of an eye” when the living saints were “changed” into their immortal bodies (1 Cor 15:52) and “caught up” together with the resurrected dead to meet Christ in the unseen realm above (1 Thess 4:17).

For more detailed information about this event, there are several PDF files which provide other translations of Josephus’ account of this event by Greek scholars, as well as the parallel accounts found in Tacitus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, and Eusebius. If you would like to have this amazing information, simply email me at <preterist1@preterist.org> to request my two articles in *Fulfilled* Magazine on "Let Us Remove Hence" and "More on Let Us Remove Hence," plus all their related charts, notes, and quotes files in PDF format.

For more information about the Resurrection, Change, and Rapture events, here are some excellent resources available for order from the IPA website (http://preterist.org):

- Ian D. Harding. *Taken to Heaven in A.D. 70* (book)
- J. Stuart Russell. *The Parousia* (book)
- Ed Stevens and Parker Voll. *2011 Garrettsville Seminar DVD*s, dealing with the Resurrection, Change, and Rapture (DVD album)
- Ed Stevens - *Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture* (book)
- Ed Stevens - *First Century Events in Chronological Order* (prepub manuscript)
- Ed Stevens - *Parable of the Tares* - MP3 Audio tracks
- Ed Stevens - *Resur-Change-Rapture* - Free PDF of my Kansas City speech
- Ed Stevens - *Gather Together the Elect* - Free PDF of the Fulfilled mag. article

Christians Disappeared at this Point (June 66)

Some have wondered where the Seven Churches of Asia were after AD 70. However, there is a bigger story here than just the disappearance of the seven churches. We also need to ask what happened to ALL the true Christians after AD 70! They were gone. We do not hear from any of them again. They wrote no more books, did no more missionary activity, nor established any more churches after AD 70. Nothing but deafening silence from those pre-70 Christians, at the very time when the heretics, Judaizers, and Gnostics were flourishing! Where were those true Christians (the "elect") who supposedly "lived and remained until the Parousia?" If they were still around afterwards, why were they so silent about what they had just seen, heard and experienced at the Parousia, especially in view of the heretics, Judaizers, and Gnostics who were teaching a future Parousia? Why didn't the true Christians speak up and set the record straight if they were still alive on earth after the Parousia? There is something very strange and incriminating about their silence, if indeed they were still around.

We need to remember that the group of Jewish Christians who moved to Pella and other areas before the war included some *Unitarian Judaizers*. Futurists and Preterists both have greatly misunderstood the character of these supposed Christians who were under the leadership of fleshly relatives of Jesus, and were looking for a literal reign of Jesus on a physical throne in Jerusalem. They denied the virgin birth of Jesus, and imposed circumcision on the Gentiles.

There were others still around after AD 70, in addition to those Unitarian Judaizers in Pella, who called themselves "Christians" and were very active in writing and teaching. They are known to us today as the Gnostics and heretics. Since there are no writings from the true Christians at this time, we are left with no other option but to examine the documents that were produced by the false "Christians" at that time. Those heretical, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphal writings are valuable source material for the historian. They reveal the real history of the first generation right after AD 70, both in what they explicitly say, as well as in what they do not say.

All interpreters of Bible prophecy, both preterists and futurists, need to examine this significant body of literature that exploded into existence during that forty-year generation right after AD 70. It was not until a generation later that some true Christians began to appear and take issue with those heretical writings. But in the meantime, the heretical writers took full advantage of the void left by the disappearance of all the true Christians. And the writings that these heretics left behind can be used to reconstruct the real history of this otherwise "dark obscure period" (as it has been called by church historians).

Church historians are puzzled by the silence and inactivity of true Christians during the generation right after AD 70. They moan and groan and complain about the lack of writings, and assume that there must have been lots of writings produced, but for some reason they were never preserved for posterity.

And because history abhors a vacuum, historical scholars are forced to fill the void however they can. Rather than admit the silence and confusion of this period, they late-date many of the NT writings and assign them to the generation after AD 70. But they did not stop there. Because they had moved some of the NT books into the post-70 period to fill that void, it forced them to push the Apostolic Father writings even later into the second century where they obviously do not belong. John A. T. Robinson, in his interesting book, *Redating the New Testament*, clearly pointed out the fallacy of that late-date theory. He convincingly demonstrated that all the New Testament writings were written before AD 70, leaving the post-70 generation devoid of any inspired writings, and allowing the Apostolic Fathers, heretics, Gnostics, and Judaizer writings to be assigned to that period. The significance of this re-dating cannot be overestimated, especially for canonical studies, ecclesiology, eschatology, and church history.

Written history does not tell us what happened to the seven churches of Asia, but the silence and absence of all the true Christians after AD 70 does indicate that something very significant must have

occurred in order to remove them from the earthly scene. They are not just **silent** – they are **absent**! They are gone – nowhere to be found. Just like history abhors a vacuum and seeks to fill it immediately, this silence and absence screams for an explanation.

The letters to the seven churches give us plenty of clues. Christ warned them about what would happen to them if they did not repent. Their lampstands would be removed. Paul indicated in his very last epistle that he wrote just before the Neronic persecution, that "all who are in Asia turned away from him" (2 Tim 1:15). That definitely included the seven churches of Asia, and it spelled their doom. Instead of repenting and being rescued out of that tribulation, they "turned away" from Christ and His apostles and either went back into Judaism or paganism. After AD 70 those churches were nowhere to be found. Evidently they were wiped out by the Neronic persecution and its associated apostasy. Their lampstands were removed. Any true Christians ("elect") who escaped that tribulation and apostasy would have been raptured at the Parousia immediately afterwards. Thus, there were no more inspired Christians and apostles left around to write anything and say anything. No wonder the heretics, Judaizers, and Gnostics were able to spread their false teaching so easily during that generation after AD 70. There were no true Christians left around to silence them, correct them, or set the record straight. With the true Christians gone, the heretics were able to swoop right in to fill the void, unhindered and unchallenged.

However, without a rapture, there still would have been some pre-70 Christians left around on earth to document the fulfillment of the Parousia, and to correct all the heresy and false teaching that was popping up everywhere. But we do not see any of that. There is not a single pre-70 Christian left around anywhere to be found. No one to silence the heretics, and claim the fulfillment of the Parousia.

We know that the pre-70 saints were not all killed in the Neronic persecution, and that not all of them fell away in the great apostasy. Jesus clearly indicated in Matthew 24 that his "elect" (those true Christians whom He had chosen) would live and remain until the Parousia, at which time He would send forth His angels to gather them together from the four points of the compass (Matt. 24:31). So, unless those elect ones were raptured out of there, they should have still been around after the Parousia to correct the heretics and claim the fulfillment. Since they were not still around doing that after AD 70, it implies that they had been gathered up by the angels, just as Jesus had promised.

But the Judaizers, Gnostics, and other heretics were still around, and very active in promoting their heresy and producing written documents, some of which have survived, and the rest of which we know about. We know what they were teaching. The second and third century church fathers quoted them and refuted them. But the question remains, where were the true Christians right after AD 70 when these false teachers began to spew out their nonsense? Why didn't they rise up against the false teachers and set the record straight? Why are the heretics the only ones who are saying anything about Christianity at this time? Why is it that we do not see anyone begin to refute them until the early or middle decades of the second century?

We have a lot of heretical writings from that very time period still in existence. Why don't we have some writings from the true Christians right after AD 70 refuting those heretics and claiming the fulfillment of the Parousia? How can it be that the writings of the true Christians were not preserved, but the writings of the heretics were preserved? And if there were some writings of the true Christians which were not preserved, why don't we at least know about their original existence, as we do for the heretical writings that are no longer extant? No one expects all of them to still be in existence, but surely it is not expecting too much to have as many of them still around as there are heretical writings still in existence, and to at least know that the others which are no longer around were in existence in the late first century! But we don't even have that! Why is there such a disparity in representation between the heretical writings and the orthodox writings? Surely, if there were any pre-70 Christians still around in the decades immediately after AD 70, they would have been challenging the heretics and claiming the fulfillment. Even if their writings did not survive, we would still know about their testimony from others who knew about it – just like we know about the heretical writings (even though many of them were destroyed). But there is a strange lack of writings here for the true Christians. Church historians have noticed this silence and have labeled the generation right after AD 70 as "an obscure dark period" (Dr. Wayne McCown, lecture on Sept. 16, 2004). The New Testament scholar Dr. Charles Hill noted that “an early Christian writer who is even aware of a hyper-preterist eschatology in the church has yet to be found” (Keith Mathison, *When Shall These Things Be?* p. 107).

The only way we can determine what was really happening with Christianity during the period right after AD 70 is to look at the writings that have survived. The historical record is there for all to see. And it tells us not only what was actually happening then, but also what was NOT happening, or what was

happening so far below the radar that it was not significant enough to be noticed in the historical record. The fact that none of the true Christians from the pre-70 generation show up after AD 70 to challenge the heretics and claim the fulfillment, is extremely significant historically. Patristic scholars are baffled by that anomaly, and futurist critics use that lack of documentation as evidence against the occurrence of the Parousia. So, this is a documentation problem for the whole preterist movement, NOT just for the rapture preterists. And the only preterists who have a reasonable explanation for that silence, are those who believe in the first century rapture. The rapture solves this historical problem.

The Rebellion Broke Out (Summer 66)

June 66 – Declaration of Independence from Paying Tax – On the 25th day of Sivan (June), the leadership in Jerusalem declared that they would no longer pay tax (tribute) to Rome. [see Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, Fifth Edition, 1937. Vol. 2, p. 184]. Although it is not stated by Josephus, this would have been the most likely date considered as their Independence Day, and the date from which they reckoned the beginning of "year one" of the revolt. This date would have been the basis for producing their new coinage with "year one" on it.

July 66 – Cestius Gallus received complaints from both Florus and the Jewish leaders about the disturbances in Caesarea and the brutality of Florus in Jerusalem. So, Cestius sent an emissary, Neapolitanus, to investigate the situation and report back to him. The Jewish people received him warmly with open arms, and treated him royally. They made it clear that their only complaint was against Florus, and not against Rome itself. However, there was plenty of evidence that a rebellion was forming in Judea, which involved much more than mere complaints against Florus. The Zealots were indeed against all Roman interference in Jewish affairs, especially in taxation and tribute matters. Both Florus and Gallus were aware of this, and therefore were acting in the best interests of Rome. [*War* 2.333-335 (2.16.1)]

Aug 66 – Josephus returned from Rome about this time (sometime between August and September) to find that the “innovations [for war] were already begun,” and the rebels were already in possession of the Temple, but that Cestius Gallus had not attacked yet (*Life* 4:17 – 5:23). He had been gone since November of AD 62 (almost four years). He definitely returned before Cestius Gallus attacked Jerusalem in Nov 66 (*Life* 17-23). He mentions that he was back before Menahem was killed by Eleazar’s forces (Sept 66). He participated in the group of moderates who appealed to Eleazar to restart the Gentile sacrifices again and stop the rebellion (*Life* 19). Several interpreters note that Josephus was back in Jerusalem by the time the Antonia fortress was captured (on Sept 5, 66, acc. to F. F. Bruce). However, that is not a necessary implication of the statements of Josephus. He explained that he had frequently challenged the rebel priests under the command of Eleazar (b. Ananias) to desist from the war effort, to the point that they were beginning to distrust him and look upon him as an enemy. (*Life* 18-19) He began to be afraid of them at that point, because they had become strong enough to push Agrippa’s forces back up into Herod’s Palace and capture the Tower of Antonia. (*Life* 20) He evidently had been living in the upper city with the other aristocratic priests who tried to remain neutral at the time when the rebels were being held in check in the temple by the moderates, Royal Troops, and Loyalists. But when the Sicarii sneaked into the temple and reinforced the rebels, they were able to drive the moderates and Agrippa’s forces up into Herod’s Palace in the upper city and take control of the Tower of Antonia. The rebels were burning and destroying many of the priestly and aristocratic homes and buildings in the upper city, so the neutral priests like Josephus would have rapidly moved out of the upper city and into the temple away from all the fighting and violence going on in the upper city. Then the flash point was well away from the temple area, and it was now safer for the priests to come back to the temple which was under the control of their fellow priests (rebel priests under Eleazar). That is most likely when he returned with the other neutral priests and “retired into the inner court of the temple.” (*Life* 20) This would have been right after the Tower of Antonia had been taken.

But the point of all this is that he was back dwelling in the upper city before the Tower was taken, and only moved into the temple after the Tower had fallen into rebel control. So I think he must have arrived back in Jerusalem soon after Eleazar had taken control of the temple area, while the forces of Agrippa and the moderates were still strong and keeping the rebel forces bottled up in the temple.

Evidently the priests did not want to go into the temple area at that time, since Agrippa's forces outside appeared to have the upper hand. So the priests like Josephus who were not required to be there (because it was not their scheduled time to serve) stayed out of the temple at that time. But when the rebels under Eleazar's command were reinforced by the Sicarii and overpowered the moderates and Agrippa's forces, then it would have been safer for the neutral priests to return to the temple and stay inside, well away from the flash point which was now in the upper city at Herod's Palace.

His return to the temple could also imply that Josephus had some kind of friendly relations or trustful relationship with the Eleazar faction in the temple. It is hard to believe that Eleazar would have allowed those priests back inside unless they were totally neutral or somewhat supportive of Eleazar's cause. This later scenario seems more likely in the case of Josephus, since not long after this he was appointed as one of the ten generals over the Zealot troops.

It therefore seems to me that when Josephus arrived back in Jerusalem he was staying in the upper city among the priestly aristocracy who were trying to remain neutral and discourage the revolt. At that time the rebel forces were weak and held in check by the moderates and Agrippa's forces, so it was not safe to be in the temple, since the temple was the flash point. But when the Sicarii sneaked into the temple to reinforce the rebels, then the moderates and Agrippa's forces were beaten back away from the temple by the rebel forces. It was then much safer for the priests to go back into the temple and stay there, because the flash point was away from the temple. But he says he left the temple again after Menahem and the principal men of his band of robbers were put to death by Eleazar's soldiers. (Jos. Life 21) He says he then "abode among the high priests and the chief of the Pharisees" (in the upper city) at that point, and that they were greatly afraid when they saw the people of the city in arms, and that they were unable to convince the rebel forces to stop. (Life 22) The neutral priests (like Josephus?) were unsure at that point what the best course of action for themselves should be. So they pretended to be of the same opinion with the rebel priests under the leadership of Eleazar, since his rebels were now in control of the temple area, lower city, and some parts of the upper city.

Another thing that makes me think that Josephus got back from Rome before the rebels had killed the Romans in the Tower of Antonia, is that since the Romans controlled the ships and seaports, it would be difficult to understand how Josephus (a Jewish priest) could have been safe on his trip back to Jerusalem if the Romans he was traveling with had heard about the rebel priests killing the Roman garrison in the Tower of Antonia. So it seems more likely that he must have arrived back in Judea before Eleazar's men killed the Roman soldiers at the Tower of Antonia.

Aug 66 – Agrippa II returned from Alexandria (Egypt) where he had gone to "congratulate Alexander upon his having obtained the government of Egypt from Nero" [*War* 2.309 (2.15.1)]. On his way back he met Neapolitanus at Jamnia (Yavneh). [*War* 2.335 (2.16.1)] A delegation from Jerusalem also went to Jamnia to welcome Agrippa back and inform him of what had happened in Jerusalem while he was in Alexandria. His sister Bernice also made him aware of these things. Then Neapolitanus and Agrippa went back to Jerusalem together. Neapolitanus was welcomed by the citizens of Jerusalem who assured him that they were loyal to Rome and only upset at Florus. Then Neapolitanus left and went back to Cestius in Antioch. Agrippa stayed in Jerusalem to have more discussions with the leaders of Jerusalem who wished to send a delegation to Nero bringing accusations against Florus so that Nero would replace him with another milder procurator. Agrippa negated that idea and charged them to submit to Florus and abandon any thoughts of rebellion, and to pay the tribute money that they had failed to pay. The moderates complied with this request for the tribute money, and quickly went out to the cities of Judea and raised forty talents to pay the back taxes. [*War* 2.405 (2.17.1)] But they still wanted to send a delegation to Nero to get Florus replaced. Agrippa insisted that this should not be done, and that the Jewish leaders should instead submit to Florus. This did not satisfy the moderates in Jerusalem. And some of the seditious insulted Agrippa even further by throwing stones at him. [*War* 2.406 (2.17.1)]

Aug 66 – Agrippa left Jerusalem after failing to stop the rebellion. [*War* 2.407 (2.17.1)]. After his failure to dissuade the Zealots from going to war (Aug 66), King Agrippa II then went to Antioch to meet with Cestius Gallus about the worsening situation in Jerusalem (Sept 66). [*War* 2.481]

Aug 66 – Some of the pro-war Zealots, evidently under the leadership of Menahem (descendant of Judas the Galilean) went to Masada and overpowered the Roman garrison, and stationed their own occupational force there. They broke into the armory there and took all the weaponry back to

Jerusalem with them. This seems to have occurred about the same time that Agrippa II was in Jerusalem trying to discourage a rebellion, or immediately afterwards. [*War* 2.408-410 (2.17.2)] Josephus also tells us that it occurred about the same time that Eleazar b. Ananias stopped the daily sacrifices of all Gentiles, including the peace offerings from Caesar. [*War* 2.408-410 (2.17.2)]

Daily Sacrifices Ceased (AD 66)

Aug 66 – **Cessation of Sacrifices** for the Romans and all Gentiles was ordered by **Eleazar**, son of High Priest Ananias b. Nedebaeus. As we remember, Eleazar was the one who blew the shofar at Passover time when Florus tried to seize all the temple gold. Eleazar and his forces took control of the Temple at that time (Apr 66), and were still in control of it at this time (Aug 66). Josephus says that this cessation of Gentile sacrifices was considered "**the true beginning of our war with the Romans**." He also said that **many of the high priests and principal men** urged Eleazar not to omit the sacrifice on behalf of the Romans, but Eleazar and his priestly followers would not yield to them. [*War* 2.408-421 (2.17.2)] The wealthy and powerful got together and conferred with the high priests, as did the leaders of the Pharisees. Josephus said that they considered this **cessation of the peace offerings as putting everything at risk, and escalating the conflict beyond the point of no return**. So they assembled all the citizens of Jerusalem before the gate of the temple court (of the priests) and expressed their outrage at **this rebellious act** which would surely provoke the Romans to war. They stated to Eleazar and his men that they considered this action as **totally unjustifiable**, and reminded them that all previous generations had adorned the temple with the donations of foreigners, and had always accepted what had been presented to them by foreign nations, especially Rome. They stated that this action of stopping the peace offerings was "**the highest instance of impiety**," and was "**bringing up novel rules of strange divine worship**." They were running the risk of having their whole country condemned for impiety by not allowing any foreigners except Jews alone to sacrifice or worship in the temple. They were rejecting both the sacrifices and oblations of not only Caesar but all Romans and all Gentiles. This action was causing even the Jewish people to fear that their own sacrifices might be rejected as well, or that it would cause the Romans to destroy the temple and end the sacrificial system altogether. Then Josephus says that the seditious inside the Temple **paid no attention to these words** by the leaders and went on with their war preparations while **neglecting to perform all of their normal and proper sacerdotal duties**. [*War* 2.409-417 (2.17.3-4)] Then Josephus says that these seditious priests who occupied the temple and who had stopped the sacrifices of foreigners, were **profaning the temple** by their presence in it with their weapons of war. [*War* 2.424 (2.17.5)] There was a lot more going on here than just the rejection of the Emperor's peace offerings. It was a wholesale **cessation of all sacrifices and offerings** from and on behalf of all Gentiles.

The rejection of the daily sacrifice on behalf of Caesar was an open declaration of independence and defiance against Rome. And it was making official a revolt that was already well underway since May of AD 66. Josephus refers to this stoppage of the Gentile sacrifices by Eleazar as the "true beginning of our war with the Romans," and that it occurred a week or so before the Festival of Wood Gathering. [*War* 2.409-421 (2.17.2)] **Shortly after rejecting the sacrifices of foreigners, Eleazar and his temple guard and a group of rebel priests took control of the whole area around the temple.** The war had now officially begun. Some of the citizens of Jerusalem, who were still bitter over the offenses of Florus, **celebrated this declaration** of independence. (Josephus *Life* 17.4). But many others **mourned this action** by the rebel priests. This rejection of the sacrifices for foreigners was understood by many of the Jewish people (including the moderate priests) as being a **nullification of the validity of the whole sacrificial system**. Some of the other sacrifices (for Jews only) continued, but not consistently and not according to the pattern prescribed in the Law. The common people and other non-Zealot priests deplored this sad state of affairs and considered it a **nullification of the whole sacrificial system**. We have already seen above that Josephus considered it gross impiety and a profanation of the temple. In the eyes of the Romans, it was certainly viewed as a nullification of their right to offer any sacrifices, since that right was conditioned on their offering up the peace offerings of Caesar.

Martin Hengel, in his book, *The Zealots* (pp. 355-366), suggests that there probably was a connection between this rejection of Gentile sacrifices and the *Eighteen Benedictions* (Amidah, or Shemoneh Esreh) of the Shammaites which seem to have been composed at about this same time (Hengel, p. 359, note 234). One of the eighteen "benedictions" contained (or implied) a prohibition

against accepting gifts from Gentiles. Also, according to some rabbinic sources (Git 56a; Lam Rab on 4.2.3) cited by Hengel, the sacrificial animal that had been sent to Jerusalem by the Roman emperor (Nero) was rejected by the priest (Zechariah) because of a slight imperfection in the animal which another Jew (Qamza b. Qamza) had deliberately introduced (and conveniently not noticed by anyone until it was taken to the temple to be sacrificed).

The Fourth Philosophy of the Zealots (Judas the Galilean) considered "the idea of offering a sacrifice to God for a man (the Roman Emperor) who described himself as God" as totally offensive. (Hengel, p. 107, note 162) It is no surprise, then, that Eleazar, sympathetic to the Zealot cause, used that principle of the Zealots and the Eighteen Benedictions as justification for rejecting all sacrifices by Gentiles. Hengel describes this rejection of the Roman emperor's sacrifice as follows: "This rupture in the traditional service of the Temple signaled the Jewish cult's official break with Roman rule. It could therefore be claimed that the **war against Rome began in the Temple**...." (Hengel, p. 361)

Hengel also mentions the possibility that **Eleazar** may have performed the High Priestly function during Yom Kippur in AD 66, since he was in control of the Temple mount at that time, and was the son of one of the High Priests (Ananias b. Nedebaeus), and was the Sagan (Captain) of the Temple Guard at the time of the revolt (Hengel, p. 360, note 240). If true, that would mean that Eleazar grievously violated the Law and set himself up in the temple as being above Moses and God (a very "lawless" thing to do – cf. 2 Thess. 2).

We have always assumed that the references in **Daniel 9:27** and 12:11 to the **sacrifices ceasing** were fulfilled in the siege of July 17 AD 70 when the daily (Tamid) sacrifice and all sacrifices ceased because of the lack of sacrificial animals and lack of priests to offer them. [*War* 6.94 (6.2.1)] But that late date does not seem to fit the statements in Daniel, nor in Matthew 24:15 regarding the Abomination, nor the statements about the Man of Lawlessness in 2 Thess 2:3-12. We also know that by the time the Zealots chose a High Priest to perform the Yom Kippur duties in Winter of AD 68, the whole Temple system was in disarray and a mere sham. The priest they chose (Phannias b. Samuel) was an uneducated and untrained countryman who had to be coached on everything he did.

This forces us to look earlier in the rebellion for another cessation of sacrifices. And the cessation of all Gentile sacrifices by Eleazar in August of AD 66, seems to be a prime candidate for its fulfillment. This cessation by Eleazar is far more significant than most interpreters have assumed. Josephus puts a lot of emphasis on it as being the very event which marked the beginning of the revolt, as a kind of declaration of independence from Rome. It very well could be the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27 and 12:11. It is a possibility that needs to be more carefully analyzed and seriously considered. [See Josephus' comments on the possible prophetic connection with these rebel priests, in *War* 4:386-388 (4.6.3). It is not clear whether Josephus has reference to Daniel 9-12, or whether it was to some other canonical or noncanonical prophet like Enoch].

In Daniel, the incident with Antiochus Epiphanes (167 BC) was viewed as an abomination of desolation. At that time it was a pagan ruler demanding unclean sacrifices to be offered to Zeus on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. The righteous Hasmonean priests rose up in revolt to purify the Temple from those abominable sacrifices and restore the true worship of Yahweh. But here in AD 66 we see something quite different spiritually speaking. This time the Roman emperor was offering clean sacrifices on the true altar in the undefiled Temple in Jerusalem. And it was the unrighteous rebel priests who rejected those legitimate Gentile sacrifices with which God was well-pleased, and instead of purifying the temple by this action, they profaned it. Quite a contrast between these two priestly actions. The priests in Antiochus' day cleansed the temple from Gentile desecration. The priests in AD 66 profaned the temple by rejecting the clean sacrifices of the Gentiles. It is no wonder that Josephus, a descendant of the righteous Hasmonean priests, described Eleazar's actions as a profanation of the temple.

At the very time when God, through Christ Jesus our Lord, was saving the Gentiles and bringing their spiritual sacrifices and offerings into His Holy Temple (the Church, and the Spiritual Temple in the Heavenly Jerusalem), the Jews were rejecting the sacrifices and offerings of the Gentiles and refusing to bring them into their physical temple in Jerusalem. Is it any wonder then that God poured out His wrath upon the nation of Israel? The temple was to be a **house of prayer** for all the nations, and a source of blessing for all the nations. The OT prophets, especially Isaiah, talk much about the gathering in of the Gentiles into God's house in the Last Days, and how the Gentiles would bring their sacrifices and offerings to the temple, and come to Jerusalem for the festivals.

Is. 56:7 Even those [foreigners, Gentiles] **I will bring to My holy mountain** and **make them joyful** in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be **acceptable on My altar**; for My house will be called a **house of prayer for all the peoples** [all nations, the Gentiles]."

Those rebel priests who had taken possession of the Temple were thieves. Josephus tells us that John of Gischala later melted down the gold and silver objects that had been donated to the Temple by Gentiles. [*War* 5:562 (5.13.6)] Josephus labeled that behavior as **temple robbery**.

Mark 11:17 And He [Jesus] began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a **robbers' den**."

All of that was fulfilled spiritually in the Church as the Gentiles were grafted into the olive tree of Spiritual Israel (Rom. 11) and attained to the unity of the faith (Eph. 4). But what a contrast here between the **physical temple** and the **spiritual temple** in the Last Days! The Jews were rejecting the sacrifices of the Gentiles and going to war with them at the very time when the Christians were accepting the sacrifices of the Gentiles and making peace with them! I do not know if Daniel had reference to this idea when he mentioned the cessation of the sacrifices, but in view of what we have discussed above, it would certainly seem possible.

Aug 66 – **The men of power (the moderates) tried to persuade Eleazar to restore the sacrifice on behalf of the emperor and all Gentiles**, but he would not listen to them. Josephus says he himself was a part of the group that tried to persuade Eleazar to restart the sacrifices (Life 19) and quit the rebellion. So the men of power (the moderates) sent ambassadors (Simon b. Ananias, Costobar, Saul, and Antipas) to Florus and Agrippa asking for reinforcement troops to help them put down the growing rebellion. Florus ignored this request, hoping that the revolt would get worse, so that the Romans would come in force and wipe out the Jews. But Agrippa did send reinforcements, three thousand horsemen [*War* 2.172-174 and 2.411-421]. Using these troops, the men of power seized the upper city (Mount Zion), while the rebels controlled the lower city and the temple. [*War* 2.418-423 (2.17.4-5)]

Av 6-13, AD 66 – **Seven days of battle** between the pro-Roman forces in the upper city and the rebel forces in the lower city and Temple area. The dates for these seven days of fighting were given by Josephus as Av 6-13 (**Aug 26 - Sept 2** in AD 66), since he tells us that the next day afterwards was the **feast of Xylophory** which fell on Av 14. [*War* 2.422-425 (2.17.5)]. Powerful Jewish men inside Jerusalem (who were moderates) requested military assistance from Florus and Agrippa to stop the rebellion from gaining momentum. Florus did nothing (because he wanted the Jews to revolt), but Agrippa II sent 3000 horsemen. But it was too little and too late. (*War* 2.173-4, and 2.411-421; Life 19). With the help of Agrippa's forces, the leading citizens, the chief priests, and all the peace loving moderates occupied the Upper City. The Lower City and Temple Area was under the control of rebel forces. There were seven days of fighting between these two forces, with neither of them gaining significant advantage. This was Jewish men spilling Jewish blood inside the city of Jerusalem where it ought not to be. This was an abomination of the Holy City.

Av 14, AD 66 – Sicarii reinforced the rebel priests in the Temple. On the eighth day, after those seven days of fighting, there was a feast of wood-carrying. Some Sicarii sneaked in among the supposedly unarmed people who had to pass through the moderates to go into the temple, and thus were able to join forces with the rebels in the temple. Thus the rebel forces were reinforced to renew their attack on the moderates who were protected by Agrippa's forces. The Sicarii and other lower class citizens posing as worshipers tricked the pro-Roman soldiers into letting them enter the temple for the feast of Xylophory which fell on Av 14 (Sept 3) [*War* 2.422-425 (2.17.5-6)], but once inside they joined the rebel forces. These reinforcements greatly empowered the rebel priests under the command of **Eleazar b. Ananias**. Emboldened by this sudden influx of new recruits, the Zealots broke forth from the temple area and attacked the pro-Roman forces. They forced the supporters and troops of Agrippa out of the upper city, including the pro-Roman High Priest **Ananias b. Nedebaeus,** all of whom fled to Herod's palace where they were guarded by the Royal and Roman soldiers. Then the rebel forces **burned the house of Ananias, the palace of Agrippa, and the Archive Building** where all the **debt records** were kept. This latter action endeared the Zealots to all the poorer folks whose debts had now been abolished. A lot of them joined the Zealots, growing the ranks of the rebels even more. [*War* 2.426-427 (2.17.6)]

Aug 26, 66 – The Tower of Antonia was attacked by the rebels on the next day (15th of Lous or Av - late August, or Sept 5th acc. to F. F. Bruce), and after a two-day siege were able to overpower and kill the Roman garrison. From here onwards the Tower of Antonia was under the control of the rebel forces until the Roman forces under Titus recaptured it late in the siege (AD 70). Next the rebel forces attacked Herod's Palace, where they persisted day and night for several days trying to starve out the defenders. [*War* 2.430-432 (2:17.7)]

Aug 66 – It would have been risky to leave Judea and Jerusalem and flee to safe havens outside Palestine after the rebellion had begun. The Zealots were recruiting everyone to stay and support the war effort. They were watching the gates to prevent easy exit. Not only Florus was moving troops in the area, but also the Zealot leaders Menahem and Eleazar were positioning their troops at Masada and inside Jerusalem as well. Armies were not only encircling Jerusalem, they were inside Jerusalem taking control of the city away from the Romans and Agrippa's loyalist forces. All refugees would have needed to leave Jerusalem long before this.

Aug 66 – Menahem returned from Masada where his soldiers had broke open Herod's armory there and taken all the weapons out to arm his own men. He returned triumphantly like a king to Jerusalem, where he assumed command of the rebel forces attacking Herod's palace where Agrippa's troops, the moderates, and Romans were camped. [*War* 2.433-434 (2.17.8)]. Menahem was the son or grandson of Judas the Galilean who had attempted a revolt back in AD 6. This was a dynasty of Zealots who had urged the Jews for two generations to stop paying taxes to Rome, and fight for independence. This was known among Jews in the first century as the *Fourth Philosophy* (besides the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes). Now that the revolt had begun, this was the day for which they had waited and prepared. Menahem believed he was the right man to lead the Zealots for such a time as this.

Sep 25, 66 – Menahem allowed Agrippa's men and the loyalist Jews safe passage out of Herod's palace, but the Roman soldiers fled to the three palace towers (Hippicus, Phasael, and Mariamne). The palace was then burned. This occurred on the sixth of the month Gorpiaeus (Elul - September in AD 66). [*War* 2.437-440 (2.17.8)]

Sep 26, 66 – Menahem killed Ananias b. Nedebaeus (former high priest, and father of Eleazar) and his brother **Hezekiah** (both of whom were moderates). This Ananias was high priest (AD 47-58) at the time of Paul's trial in AD 58. Paul had predicted that God was about to strike Ananias (Acts 23:3), and sure enough about eight years later he was killed by Menahem [*War* 2.441 (2.17.9)]. Josephus says that Ananias was caught near the canal in the palace grounds where he had been hiding, and was killed on the next day after the rebels had taken control of the palace and the Romans had fled to the three towers (on the seventh day of the month Gorpiaeus or Elul - September in AD 66). This victory over the moderates inflated the ego of Menahem so much, Josephus says, that Menahem believed himself to have no rival in the leadership of the revolt, and became overbearingly tyrannical. Eleazar and his men could not tolerate Menahem, so they formed a conspiracy to kill him and take full control of the rebel forces [*War* 2.442-443 (2.17.9)].

Sep 66 – Menahem put on royal garments and pompously went up into the temple to worship with some of his armed men as bodyguards. While he was in the temple, Menahem was attacked by the priestly rebels under the command of Eleazar (who was the son of the Ananias killed by Menahem). Eleazar's forces captured and killed Menahem in revenge for killing Eleazar's father, and totally disrupted Menahem's forces in Jerusalem. A few of them escaped to Masada where they remained until the end of the war (e.g., Eleazar b. Yair, a relative of Menahem, was supposedly among those who fled to Masada at this time). This very effectively put an end to Menahem's role in the revolt. Eleazar had now regained control of the Zealot forces. [*War* 2.442-448 (2.17.9)]

Sep 66 – Josephus left the temple and rejoined the chief priests and leading Pharisees to consult with them about what needed to be done. They ended up joining with the rebels, at least ostensibly, since as priests they needed access to the temple to perform their priestly duties, and the temple was under the control of Eleazar and his soldiers. Many of the priests went along with Eleazar, so that they could continue their function as priests in the temple.

Sep 66 – Eleazar and his forces tricked the Roman garrison to leave the three palace towers. Eleazar promised to spare their lives if they would abandon the fortress and lay down their arms. But as soon as the Romans came out and laid down their arms and started walking away, Eleazar and his men fell upon them and slaughtered them, in breach of their agreement. To make matters worse, this massacre of the Roman garrison happened on a Sabbath day, when Jews were forbidden from fighting. Josephus says, “the city was all over polluted with such abominations.” The people in Jerusalem made public lamentation over this treacherous killing of Roman soldiers, and mourned in dread of the Roman reaction, or divine vengeance for breaking the Sabbath [*War* 2.450-456 (2.17.10)]. The inhabitants of Jerusalem as well as the moderate leaders grieved over the consequences that they would now suffer because of this crime of Eleazar and his soldiers [War 2.455 (2.17.10)].

Sep 66 – Jews Massacred in Caesarea. The divine vengeance did not long delay, for "on the very same day and hour" that Eleazar had killed the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem, Josephus says there were over twenty thousand Jews slaughtered by the Greco-Syrian population in Caesarea. **Caesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants**. Florus captured any Jews who fled from Caesarea and sent them to the galley ships. [*War* 2.457 (2.18.1)]. And the news of this rebellion had already reached Cestius Gallus in Syria, and he was preparing his troops for the march to Jerusalem [*War* 2.454-455 (2.17.10) and *Life* 5-6 and 22-24].

Sep 66 – Nero was on his way to Greece to participate in the games and musical contests. Vespasian and his legion of powerful soldiers accompanied him as his bodyguard. Nero remained in Greece for over a year (from Sept 66 until early 68). This extended visit of Nero to Greece was referred to by some of the Greek writers as the Parousia (visitation) of Nero. It was not a one-day event, but an extended visit of more than a year. That helps us understand that the Parousia of Christ was not a one-day event either. It was an extended visitation to reward His saints and judge His enemies. That took longer than one day, or even one year, to accomplish. For a detailed explanation of the meaning of Parousia, see Adolf Deismann’s book, *Light From the Ancient East*.

Sep 66 – Zealot Response to Caesarea Massacre. This destruction of the whole Jewish community at Caesarea enraged the Jewish people and provoked them to retaliatory action. The Jews quickly assembled militia bands and attacked numerous villages of the Syrians and neighboring cities, killing the Greek-Syrian residents of any cities where the Gentiles were in the minority, such as: Philadelphia, Sebonitis, Gerasa, **Pella**, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Gaulonitis, Kedasa, Ptolemais, Gaba, Caesarea, Sabaste/Samaria, Ashkelon, Anthedon, Gaza, and Cyprus [Josephus *War* 2.458 (2.18.1)]. Note that **Pella** was one of the cities attacked by these Zealot bands. This massacre of the Gentiles in those cities occurred in late AD 66 (September) long after the Christians had supposedly fled to Pella, as well as two or three months after the true Christians had been raptured out of there, so there probably were no true Christians left in Pella at the time of the attack, unless they became Christians after the rapture. There were armies encircling cities all over Palestine at this time. The rebel forces attacked Ashkelon a second time under **Niger the Peraean**, and lost eight thousand more men (in addition to the ten thousand they had lost the first time). Niger was nearly killed, but his survival was considered to be providential and a sign that God would use him to defeat the Romans. However, that was a false hope. He was such a brilliant strategist and valiant warrior that the Zealots envied him and feared he would take over their leadership. So in the internecine strife that broke out in the city in AD 68, the Zealots found an excuse to kill Niger [*War* 4:359 (4.6.1)].

Sep 66 – The Syrians retaliated and killed all the Jewish inhabitants within their cities. Immediately upon the outbreak of the rebellion, Gentile communities loyal to Rome began plundering, evicting or slaughtering their Jewish inhabitants. Non-Jewish citizens of Scythopolis killed 13,000 of their Jewish inhabitants. [*War* 2.18.3 (2.466ff)] There was further violence against Jewish communities in Ashkelon, Ptolemais, Tyre and other cities which had large Jewish communities. [*War* 2.12.5 (2.447-480)] There was a riot between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria. *War* 2.18.7 (2.487ff) The Jewish population of Damascus (numbering 10,000) were rounded up and killed. Josephus says it was common in those days to see cities filled with dead bodies lying unburied, and whole provinces full of such calamities. [*War* 2.458-465 (2.18.1-2)] Some Syrian cities, such as Antioch, Sidon, and Apamia, spared their Jewish inhabitants. In the retaliatory raids by the Syrians against the Jews, Josephus mentions some of the largest Jewish casualties (*War* 2.18.5-11):

Scythopolis (13,000 Jews) [*War* 2.18.3 (2.466ff)]
Ashkelon (2500 Jews) (*War* 3.1.2-3, 15-28) Silas & John the Essene killed
Ptolemais (2000 Jews plus many captured) (*War* 2.12.5 447-480)
Tyre (a great number killed and imprisoned) (*War* 2.12.5 447-480)
Hippos (a great number killed and imprisoned)
Gadara (a great number killed and imprisoned)
Alexandria (50,000 killed, "overflowed with blood") cf. Rev. 14:20 (*War* 2.18.7 487ff)
Damascus (10,000 killed "in one hour's time") – *War* 2.561 (2.20.2)
Joppa (8400 killed)
Asamon (2000 killed)

Sep 66 – Massacre in Alexandria. The ethnic conflict in Judea spread quickly to Alexandria, where the prefect Tiberius Alexander, an apostate Jew and loyal supporter of the Roman cause, ordered his legions to kill and plunder the Jewish quarter of Alexandria. Fifty thousand Judeans were supposedly killed in that violent clash between the Greek citizens and the Judean citizens.

Summary of these events according to the Josephus.org website:
http://www.josephus.org/warChronology1.htm#map

1. Three simultaneous actions in Aug 66: (a) Agrippa II left Jerusalem after failing to persuade the Judeans to quit the rebellion and went to Antioch to consult with Cestius Gallus. (b) Eleazar b. Ananias and his Zealot forces took control of the Temple and stopped all sacrifices of Gentiles. (c) Menahem's forces broke into Masada, killed the Roman garrison there, and took all the weaponry back to Jerusalem.
2. The moderates, some of the chief priests, and leaders of the Pharisees appealed to Eleazar to restart the sacrifices from all Gentiles, but to no avail. Josephus was among that group who appealed to Eleazar. So they sent four of their moderate leaders to Florus and Agrippa to ask for military assistance.
3. Agrippa sent 3000 cavalrymen to Jerusalem against Eleazar and his forces, but they were unable to regain control of the Temple area, which was tightly held by Eleazar b. Ananias. Seven days of battles back and forth with no advantage gained to either side.
4. The Sicarii joined the rebels inside the temple, thus reinforcing the Zealots, which enabled them to force the royalists from the upper city.
5. Royal (Agrippa's) and Roman soldiers took refuge in Herod's palace.
6. The rebels then burned the house of Ananias, the palace of Agrippa, and the Archives building where debt records were kept, then defeated the Roman garrison in the Tower of Antonia.
7. Herod's palace was then attacked by the Zealot forces of Eleazar. Josephus moved back into the Temple area to get away from the upper city where the fighting was going on.
8. Menahem brought the weaponry from Masada, and took command of the assault on the Herod's palace.
9. Menahem was successful in driving the Royal and Roman soldiers from the palace to the towers of Phasael, Mariamne, and Hippicus. Menahem allowed the forces of Agrippa to leave the palace and flee back to Agrippa, but the Roman garrison fled to the three towers of the palace. The palace was burned, while they attacked the Roman soldiers in the three towers. **(Elul 6, Sept. 25, AD 66)**
10. Menahem had Ananias b. Nedebaeus killed. Ananias was an ally of Agrippa, and very much opposed to the Zealot cause of Menahem. After doing all this, Menahem paraded himself through the city in purple as if he was now the King Messiah (in replacement of Agrippa and the other contenders such as Eleazar).
11. Menahem and his bodyguard were attacked in the temple by the forces of Eleazar (the son of Ananias whom Menahem had just killed). Most of Menahem's bodyguard were killed and Menahem himself was captured and killed. The rest of Menahem's soldiers joined with the other rebel forces or fled to Masada.
12. The Romans in the towers surrendered to Eleazar and were ruthlessly killed in breach of his agreement to spare their lives if they surrendered and laid down their weapons. On the same day and hour, 20,000 Jews were slaughtered in Caesarea. Thus, all of Jerusalem was in the hands of the rebel forces under the command of Eleazar, but Caesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants.

Concluding Thoughts

The **Great Tribulation** upon the Church was now over, and the **Wrath Outpouring** upon the Jews was about to begin. By the ruthless and lawless slaughter of the Roman garrison by Eleazar, the Zealots provoked a massive military response from the Romans, and the Roman general Cestius Gallus wasted no time in providing that response. Thus began the Jewish War with Rome which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the complete dismantling of the Herodian Temple. That war will be the focus of our next book in this series. We are planning (Lord willing) to produce two sequels: (1) *Chronology of the Jewish War (AD 66-73)*, and (2) *First Generation After the End (AD 73-110)*.

In summary, we have seen how all the prophecies of Jesus and the Apostles were fulfilled by the Neronic persecution and the events in Judea leading up to the outbreak of the rebellion. All the pageantry of these events is very much like a stage play. After the gruesome scenes of the Neronic persecution and the outbreak of the Zealot rebellion, it appears that **all of the pre-70 saints had left the stage**, and the Zealots took their place. We would have expected those pre-70 saints to come back onstage after the war and proclaim their Triumph over the forces of darkness after the Zealot rebellion had been crushed. Instead, the action on the stage closes with the Tragedy of the Jewish defeat, and the true Church remains silent and invisible for at least two decades. We are left wondering what happened to those Christian heroes. Where was their victory? Why is there no triumphal procession and wedding banquet to celebrate their marriage to the Lamb? There is a very **strange silence** here at the very time when there should have been sheer ecstasy and lavish jubilation.

In my study of the history of the first century church, I was profoundly struck by the radical contrast between the intense missionary and literary activity of the saints before AD 66, and their **utter silence and absence afterward**. Many patristic scholars have noticed this same contrast and commented on it. They refer to the first few decades after AD 70 as being a **dark or obscure period**. John A. T. Robinson compares it to a train entering a tunnel. When it finally reappeared out of the tunnel, it had undergone some significant changes, but we are at a loss to know how and why those changes occurred. There are no writings from any of the pre-70 saints to tell us what happened during that **tunnel period**. The church historians refer to this as a strange or awkward silence.

At the very time when those pre-70 saints should have been dancing in the streets and shouting from the rooftops about what they had just seen, heard, and experienced at the Parousia, we instead have nothing but silence. ***They left the earthly stage never to reappear.*** Not a single one of those "elect" saints, some of whom are named in the New Testament and who lived and remained until the Parousia, ever showed up after AD 70 to claim that they had just witnessed and experienced the Parousia. Futurist historical theologians, like Dr. Charles Hill, are baffled by this silence and absence. Jesus and the apostles all promised that "some of them standing there" would not die before the Parousia, and those dear "elect" saints who remained alive until the Parousia were not killed at the Parousia, so they should have been around afterward to claim the fulfillment of it. They especially should have spoken up and set the record straight when Papias, Polycarp, Ignatius, and other second century Christian writers began teaching that the Parousia was still future.

So what happened to those pre-70 "elect" saints who lived and remained until the Parousia? Where did they go? Why didn't at least one of them reappear on the stage after AD 70 to proclaim their Triumph? **Nothing short of a rapture** can explain the utter silence and complete absence of those dear pre-70 saints after AD 70. Jesus had promised them that the Bride would be taken from her father's house on earth, and taken in procession to heaven where she would be married to the Son in His Father's House in heaven. Was the Bride ever taken to the Father's house in heaven? Was their marriage ever consummated? There was no marriage feast on earth, so the consummation of the marriage and the wedding feast must have occurred in the unseen realm of heaven. That means that the living saints must have been taken to heaven in order to participate in the marriage of the Bride and the wedding feast afterwards.

There is no historical testimony after AD 70 from any of those living and remaining saints claiming that they saw, heard, and experienced those things that Jesus and the Apostles had promised. Why was their triumphal procession and victory celebration and wedding feast not experienced on earth in the visible realm? It was because it occurred in the unseen realm of heaven above. Those living and remaining saints were promised to be a part of that victory celebration and wedding feast. How did they get to participate in it without dying? Apostle Paul said their bodies would be changed from mortal to immortal

(visible to invisible) without having to experience physical death, and then they would be caught up with the resurrected saints to be in the presence of Christ forever afterwards (1 Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:21).

If that is not what happened, then we would have to surmise that those saints who remained alive at the time of the Parousia never participated in the triumphal procession, the marriage consummation, or the wedding feast in the unseen realm of heaven. That means that the living saints were left out of that glorious celebration which the resurrected saints experienced in the unseen realm of heaven. Can you accept that? I surely can not! In view of all the expectations that Jesus and the Apostles gave to those living saints, it is impossible to believe that they were left behind on earth without participating in that glorious celebration in the unseen realm of heaven, and left totally ignorant and confused about it, not even knowing that those things had occurred! Are you comfortable with that scenario? I certainly am not!

There were numerous promises made by Jesus and the Apostles about what the living and remaining saints could **expect to see, hear, and experience** at the Parousia. They were NOT expecting to be left behind on earth afterwards not even aware that the Parousia had occurred. The following six questions with their biblical answers will show what **their real expectations** were.

We know that the dead saints were raised out of Hades and given their new immortal bodies at the Parousia, but what about the saints who were still alive at Christ's return? *What does Scripture say they would see, hear, and experience at the Second Coming?* Read each question and search the following Scriptures and their contexts to find the answers (all Scriptures NASB95, except where otherwise noted):

1. What did Jesus say the living saints would see, hear, and experience at His return?

Matt 16:28 . . . some of those who are standing here who *will not taste death* until they *see the Son of Man coming . . . .*

Matt 24:30-31 . . . they will *see the Son of Man coming* on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a *great trumpet* and they will *gather together His elect . . . .*

Luke 21:36 . . . that you may have strength to *escape* all these things that are about to take place, and to *stand before the Son of Man*.

John 14:3 . . . I will come again and *receive you to Myself*, that *where I am, there you may be also*.

2. What did the Apostles say the living saints would see, hear, and experience at His return?

1 Thess 5:23 . . . may your *whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved* blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

Rom 8:18-25 . . . the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory* that is about to be [Gk. mello] *revealed to us*. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for *the revealing* of the sons of God . . . for our *adoption as sons*, the *redemption of our body* . . . .

1 John 2:28 . . . abide in Him so that *when He appears* we may *have confidence* and *not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming* . . . .

2 Thess 1:7, 10 . . . the Lord Jesus will be *revealed* from heaven with His mighty angels . . . when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be *marveled at among all who have believed* . . . .

1 Cor 15:51-53 . . . we will not all sleep [die before the Parousia], but *we will all be changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the *trumpet will sound*, and the dead [Gk. is plural] will be raised imperishable, and *we will be changed*. . . . *put on the imperishable* . . . *put on immortality*.

1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with *a shout*, with the *voice of the archangel* and with the *trumpet of God*, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then *we who are alive and remain* will be *caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*

3. What rewards did Christ and the Apostles say that the living saints would receive at His return?

Matt 19:28-29 . . . you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, *you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. And everyone who has [forfeited property or relationships] for My name's sake, *will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life*.

Jude 1:21 . . . waiting anxiously for . . . *eternal life*.

1 Thess 1:10 . . . wait for His Son from heaven . . . who *rescues us* from the wrath to come.

1 Thess 5:9-10 . . . God has not appointed us to wrath, but for *obtaining salvation* . . . and to await His Son from Heaven . . . the One *delivering us from the coming wrath*.

2 Thess 1:7-10 . . . *give relief to you* who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. . . . when He comes to be *glorified in His saints* on that day, and *to be marveled at among all who have believed* . . . .

1 Pet 1:7 . . . so that the proof of your faith . . . may be found to *result in praise and glory and honor* at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 5:1, 4, 6 . . . partaker also of *the glory that is about to be* [Gk. mello] *revealed* . . . when the Chief Shepherd appears you will *receive the unfading crown of glory* . . . *exalt you* at the proper time . . . .

Rom 8:17-23 . . . if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be *glorified with Him*. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory that is about to be* [Gk. mello] *revealed to us*. . . . *the revealing of the sons of God*. . . . creation itself also will be *set free from its slavery to corruption* into the *freedom of the glory of the children of God*. . . . we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our *adoption as sons*, the *redemption of our body*.

2 Tim 4:8 . . . in the future there is laid up for me the *crown of righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will *award to* . . . all who have loved His appearing.

Rev 3:10-11 . . . I also will *keep you from the hour of testing*, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world . . . hold fast what you have, so that no one will take *your crown*.

4. How intense were these expectations of the living saints?

Heb 9:28 [Christ] . . . will appear a second time . . . to those who *eagerly await* Him.

Rev 6:10 . . . ***How long, O Lord***, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging . . . .

1 Cor 16:22 . . . ***Maranatha*** [Aramaic expression meaning, *Our Lord, Come!*].

Rev 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus*!

Rom 8:19-25 For the *anxious longing* of the creation *waits eagerly* for the revealing of the sons of God . . . we ourselves *groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly* for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body . . . we *hope* for what we do not see, with perseverance we *wait eagerly* for it.

2 Cor 5:2-4 For indeed in this house *we groan, longing to be clothed* with our dwelling from heaven . . . while we are in this tent, *we groan*, being *burdened* . . . .

2 Tim 4:8 . . . the crown of righteousness, which the Lord . . . will award to . . . all who have *loved His appearing*.

Jude 1:21 . . . *waiting anxiously* for . . . eternal life.

1 Cor 1:7 . . . *awaiting eagerly* the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 21:36 But *keep on the alert* at all times, *praying* that you may have strength to escape . . . and to stand before the Son of Man.

2 Pet 3:12-14 . . . *looking for and hastening* the coming of the day of God . . . according to His promise *we are looking for* new heavens and a new earth . . . since *you look for these things*, be *diligent* to be *found by Him* in peace, spotless and blameless . . . .

1 Pet 1:13 Therefore, *prepare your minds* for action, *keep sober* in spirit, *fix your hope completely* on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 4:13 . . . but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, *keep on rejoicing*, so that also at the revelation of His glory *you may rejoice with exultation*.

1 John 2:28 . . . abide in Him so that *when He appears* we may *have confidence* and *not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming* . . . .

5. What was supposed to happen to the bodies of the living saints at the Parousia?

1 Cor 15:37-38 . . . that which you sow [the seed], *you do not sow the body which is to be* . . . But *God gives it* [the seed] *a body* just as He wished, and *to each of the seeds a body of its own*. [note the plural number of bodies here, not one collective body]

1 Cor 15:51-53 . . . we will *not all sleep* [die], but *we will all be changed* . . . the dead ones [plural] will be raised incorruptible, and *we will be changed. . . . put on incorruption . . . put on immortality*. [Correct translation of the Greek—note the plural number of dead ones, and the distinction between living and dead saints. The dead saints are raised, but the living saints are changed.

So the resurrection is not of a collective body of both living and dead saints. The resurrection applies only to the dead saints.]

1 John 3:2 . . . We know that when He appears, *we will be like Him* . . . .

Phil 3:20-21 . . . eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will *transform our lowly [mortal] body* that it may be *conformed to His glorious body* . . . . (NKJV)

2 Cor 5:2-4 . . . *in this house* [body] we groan, longing to be *clothed with our dwelling from heaven*, inasmuch as we, having *put it on*, will not be found naked [disembodied]. . . . *in this tent* [body], we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be *unclothed* [disembodied by death] but *to be clothed upon [with our immortal bodies]*, so that what is *mortal will be swallowed up by life*. (cf. Weymouth and NIV)

Rom 8:17-23 . . . if indeed we *suffer* with Him so that we may also be *glorified* with Him. For I consider that the *sufferings* of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory* that is about to be [Gk. mello] revealed to us. . . . the revealing of the sons of God. . . . creation itself also will be *set free from its slavery to corruption* into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. . . . we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the *redemption of our body*.

1 Thess 5:23 . . . may your *whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved* blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [NKJV]

1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then *we who are alive and remain* will be *caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air* . . . .

*[**Note** that the catching up here in 1 Thess 4:17 is something that happened to the living and remaining saints while they were still alive, not after they died. The dead were raised and caught up, but the living were changed and caught up. The bodies of those living saints had to be changed, since flesh and blood bodies cannot dwell in the spiritual realm (1 Cor. 15:50-52). This bodily change enabled them to avoid physical death, and then they were caught up in their new immortal bodies along with the resurrected dead to be with Christ forever.]*

6. Where was Christ, and where were the living saints at the time of the Parousia?

Matt 19:28 And Jesus said to [the twelve] . . . in the regeneration when the Son of Man will *sit on His glorious throne*, you also shall *sit upon twelve thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Luke 22:30 that you may eat and drink *at My table in My kingdom*, and you will *sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. [cf. Matt 8:11; Luke 13:28-29; 14:15; and Enoch 62:14]

Matt 24:30-31 . . . they will see the Son of Man coming *on the clouds of heaven* with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will *gather together His elect* . . . from one end of the heavens to the other.

2 Thess 2:1 . . . the coming [Gk. Parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ and *our gathering together to Him* . . . .

John 14:3 I will come again and *receive you to Myself*, that *where I am, there you may be also*.

2 Thess 1:7-10 . . . the Lord Jesus will be *revealed from heaven* with His mighty angels in flaming fire . . . when He comes to be *glorified in His saints* on that day, and to be *marveled at among all who have believed* . . . .

Col 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, is *revealed*, then you also will be *revealed with Him in glory*.

Luke 21:36 . . . *stand before the Son of Man.*

Jude 24 . . . *stand in the presence of His glory* blameless with *great joy* . . . .

1 John 2:28 . . . abide in Him so that *when He appears* we may have confidence and *not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming* . . . .

2 Cor 4:14 . . . knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and *will present us with you*.

1 Thess 2:19 . . . *in the presence* of our Lord Jesus *at His Parousia*

1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will *descend from heaven* . . . caught up together with them in the clouds to *meet the Lord in the air*. And so *we will always be with the Lord*.

From the above, it is apparent that the saints living at the time of the Parousia were anxiously awaiting His return, groaning within themselves, longing to be clothed with their immortal bodies. They were

looking for and hastening the day. They had fixed their hope completely upon it. It was not something they would let pass by unnoticed.

They were told they would not only be consciously aware of Christ's return, but they would *see* the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, and Christ would send His angels to gather them. He told the apostles that all twelve of them (including those still alive) would be received to Him and sit on twelve thrones and dwell in the places He had prepared for them in His Father's house (heaven).

Before the saints could be caught up into the spiritual realm where Christ and the angels were, their lowly (mortal) bodies had to be changed (transformed) from mortal to immortal to be like Christ's glorious body. The dead were raised first, then the living were changed, and together as one group they were caught up to be with Christ.

They would not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming, but would draw near to Him and glorify him on that day and marvel at Him in the presence of all believers who were gathered there (living and dead). They would rejoice with exultation when they stood before the Son of Man in the presence of His glory at His Parousia, and from that time forward they would always be with the Lord.

These were their **great expectations**, and if they were not realized in the experiential way these Scriptures indicate, then they would not only have been disappointed and disillusioned, but outraged and complaining about it. These expectations were given to them by Christ and the apostles. What the *time statements* do for the *time* of fulfillment, the *expectation statements* do for the *nature* of fulfillment. It is not enough to affirm that the *time* of Christ's return was fulfilled accurately. The *nature* of that coming (as defined by these expectation statements) must also be fulfilled exactly the way Christ and the apostles promised it would, or the credibility of the Christian faith is forfeited. The *expectation statements* demand our attention just as much as the *time statements*.

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I would love to hear from you if you have questions or comments about anything that was presented here. Feel free to email me (**preterist1@preterist.org**).

For More Information About the Rapture:

All three of these books may be obtained from *International Preterist Association* at our secure website bookstore (**http://preterist.org/store**).

1. *Taken To Heaven in AD 70 . . . blessings expected at the Parousia*—by Ian D. Harding
2. *The Parousia, A Critical Inquiry Into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*—by James Stuart Russell
3. *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture*—by Edward E. Stevens

We have many podcasts (audio lessons) which explain all different aspects of the first century rapture. Each of those podcasts has a written transcript in PDF form and those PDFs are available by email request. That enables you to listen to the podcast while you follow along in the written transcript. Those podcasts are archived on our website (**http://preterist.org/podcast**), and the written transcript for each podcast is available by email request (**preterist1@preterist.org**). Be sure to ask for them by their respective title and date of podcast.

APPENDICES

1. DATES FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS (and the order in which they were written):

Matthew (AD 31-38)
Mark (AD 38-44)
Galatians (AD 51)
1 Thess. (AD 51-52)
2 Thess. (AD 51-52)
1 Corinthians (AD 57)
2 Corinthians (AD 57)
Romans (AD 58)
Luke (AD 61)
Acts (AD 61-62)
John (AD 60-62)
James (AD 61-62)
1, 2, 3 John (AD 61-62)
Revelation (AD 62-63)
Ephesians (AD 62-63)
Colossians (AD 62-63)
Philemon (AD 62-63)
Philippians (AD 62-63)
Hebrews (AD 62-63)
Titus (mid-AD 63)
1 Timothy (mid-AD 63)
1 Peter (mid-AD 63)
2 Timothy (late-AD 63)
Jude (AD 64)
2 Peter (AD 64)

2. THE CITY DISTURBANCES: (AD 62-66):

Caesarea (many Jews killed) (59 AD?)
Jerusalem (3600 killed) (Spring of 66 AD?)
Caesarea (20,000 killed)
Syrian cities (many killed)
Scythopolis (13,000 massacred)
Ashkelon (2500 killed)
Ptolemais (2000 killed)
Tyre, Hippos & Gadara (many killed & imprisoned)
Alexandria ("overflowed with blood" - 50,000 killed) See Rev. 14:20 in comparison to this
Joppa (8400 killed)
Asamon (2000 killed)

3. ROMAN RULERS: (31 BC to AD 190)

Pompey (63-60 BC)
Pompey, Crassus, and Julius (First Triumvirate – 60-53 BC)
Pompey and Julius (53-48 BC)
Julius Caesar (48-44 BC)
Civil War between Brutus-Cassius and Antony-Octavian (44-42 BC)
Co-rule by Antony and Octavian (42-31 BC)
Augustus (Octavian) (31 BC to AD 14)
Tiberius (AD 14-37)
Gaius (Caligula) (AD 37-41)
Claudius (AD 41-54)
Nero (AD 54-68)
Galba (AD 68-69)
Otho (AD 69)
Vitellius (AD 69)
Vespasian (AD 69-79)
Titus (AD 79-81)
Domitian (AD 81-96)
Nerva (AD 96-98)
Trajan (AD 98-117)
Hadrian (AD 117-138)
Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161)

Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180)
Commodus (AD 180-190)

4. HERODIAN RULERS & PROCURATORS: (37 BC–AD 44)
Herod the Great (king) (37 BC to 4 BC)
Archalaeus (Ethnarch) (4 BC to AD 6)
Procurator Coponius (AD 6-9)
Procurator Marcus Ambivius (AD 9-12)
Procurator Annius Rufus (AD 12-15)
Procurator Valerius Gratus (AD 15-26)
Procurator Pontius Pilate (AD 26-36)
Procurator Marcellus (AD 37)
Procurator Marullus (AD 37-41)
Herod Agrippa I (king) (AD 41-44)
Herod Agrippa II (king of Chalcis and others) (AD 48-70)

5. ROMAN PROCURATORS OF JUDEA: (AD 44-66)
Cuspius Fadus (44-46 AD)
Tiberius Julius Alexander (46-48 AD)
Ventidius Cumanus (48-52 AD)
Antonius Felix (52-59 AD)
Porcius Festus (59-62 AD)
Albinus (62-64 AD)
Gessius Florus (64-66 AD)
Marcus Antonius Julianus (AD 70) [*War* 6.238 (6.4.3)]

6. HIGH PRIESTS AFTER THE EXILE (c. 350 BC to AD 70)
(From F. F. Bruce)

The House of Zadok
Jaddua (c. 350-320 BC)
Onias I (c. 320-290 BC)
Simon I (c. 290-275 BC)
Eleazar (c. 275-260 BC)
Manasseh (c. 260-245 BC)
Onias II (c. 245-220 BC)
Simon II (c. 220-198 BC)
Onias III (c. 198-174 BC)

Appointed By Seleucid Kings or Pretenders
Jason (brother of Onias III) (174-171 BC)
Menelaus (171-161 BC)
Alcimus (161-159 BC)
Interregnum (159-152 BC)
Jonathan the Hasmonean (152-143 BC)
Simon the Hasmonean (143-140 BC)

Appointed by the People: The Hasmonean Dynasty
Simon (140-134 BC)
John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC)
Aristobulus I (104-103 BC)
Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC)
Hyrcanus II (Salome Alexandra) (76-67 BC)
Aristobulus II (67-63 BC)
Hyrcanus II (63-40 BC)
Antigonus (40-37 BC)

Appointed By Herod the Great (37 BC to 4 BC)
Hananel (37-36 BC)
Aristobulus, last of the Hasmoneans (Spring-Autumn 36 BC)
Hananel (restored) (36-30 BC)
Jesus son of Phabes (30-23 BC)
Simon son of Boethus (traded daughter for High Priesthood) (23-5 BC)
Matthew son of Theophilus (5 BC)
Joseph son of Ellem (5-4 BC)
Joazar son of Boethus (first time) (4 BC)

Appointed By Archalaeus, Ethnarch of Judea (4 BC–AD 6)
Eleazar son of Boethus (4-3 BC)
Jesus son of See (3 BC to AD 6)
Joazar son of Boethus (second time) (AD 6)

Appointed By Quirinius, Legate of Syria
Ananus I, son of Seth (*Antiq*. 18.2.1) (AD 6-15)

Appointed By Valerius Gratus, Procurator of Judea
Ismael son of Phabi (AD 15-16)
Eleazar son of Ananus I (AD 16-17)
Simon son of Kami (AD 17-18)
Joseph Caiaphas, son-in-law of Ananus I (AD 18-36)

Appointed By Vitellius, Legate of Syria
Jonathan son of Ananus I (*Antiq*. 19.6.4) (AD 36-37)
Theophilus son of Ananus I (AD 37-41)

Appointed By Herod Agrippa I, King of Judea
Simon Cantheras, son of Boethus (*Antiq*. 19.6.2) (AD 41-42)
Matthias son of Ananus I (brother of Jonathan) (AD 42--43)
Elionai son of Cantheras (AD 43-44)

Appointed By Herod of Chalcis
Joseph son of Kami (AD 44-47)
Ananias son of Nedebaeus (sent in bonds to Rome, father of the Eleazar who stopped sacrifices for Gentiles, later killed by Menahem) (AD 47-58)

Appointed By Herod Agrippa II
Ishmael son of Phabi (AD 58-60)
Joseph Kabi son of Simon (AD 60-62)
Ananus II son of Ananus I (only 3 months in AD 62, Antiq. 20.9.1)
Jesus son of Damnaeus (AD 62-63)
Jesus son of Gamaliel (AD 63-65)
Matthias son of Theophilus, son of Ananus I (son of Boethus? cf. *War* 5.13.1) (AD 65-68). There are some who have speculated that Matthias was related to Josephus (father or brother) since Josephus says his father's name was Matthias, and maybe a brother by that name also.

Appointed By The People During The War
Phinehas son of Samuel (AD 68-70)

7. About the Dates Used in Josephus

Goldberg and others believe Josephus was following the Macedonian calendar in assigning dates to events, since he uses the Macedonian month names instead of the Hebrew month names. Below are the Hebrew names of the months, with the Macedonian and Modern calendar equivalents.

Jewish Calendar			
Hebrew Months	**Macedonian Months**	**Modern Equivalents**	**Feasts and Events**
Tishrei	Hyperberetaios	September-October	Rosh HaShanah (Tishrei 1) Yom Kippur (Tishrei 10) Sukkot (Tishrei 15) Shemini Atzeret (Tishrei 22) Simchat Torah (Tishrei 23)
Chesvan	Dios	November-December	
Kislev	Apellaios	December	Chanukah (Kislev 25)
Tevet	Audunaios	January	Fast of Babylonian Siege of Jerus. in 586 BC (Tevet 10)
Shevat	Peritios	January-February	
Adar	Dystros	March	Purim (Adar 14)
Nisan	Xanthikos	March-April	Passover (Nisan 14)
Iyar	Artemisios	April-May	
Sivan	Daisios	May-June	Shavuot - Pentecost (Sivan 5)
Tammuz	Panamos	June-July	
Av	Loios	July-August	Tisha B'Av - The Fast (Av 9)
Elul	Gorpiaios	August-September	

Year Dates Written in Greek Letters							
First Digit			**Second Digit**			**Third Digit**	
Α	1		Ι	10		Ρ	100
Β	2		Κ	20		Σ	200
Γ	3		Λ	30		Τ	300
Δ	4		Μ	40		Υ	400
Ε	5		Ν	50		Φ	500
ς	6		Ξ	60			
Ζ	7		Ο	70			
Η	8		Π	80			
Θ	9		Qoppa	90			

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